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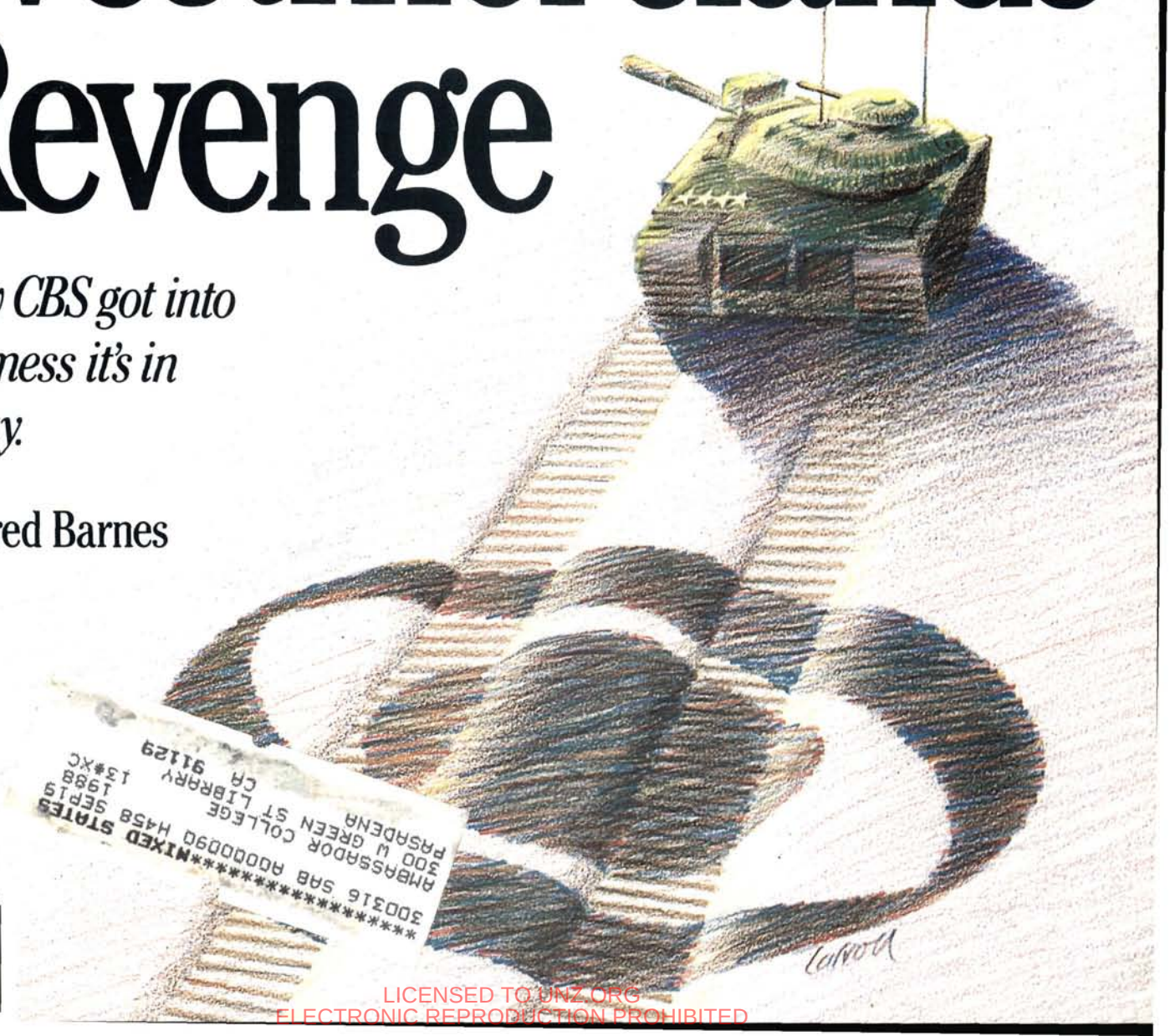
By Fred Barnes



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FOUNDED 1914 — *A Weekly Journal of Opinion* — ISSUE 3,768

WASHINGTON, D.C. — APRIL 6, 1987

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THE NEW REPUBLIC, Vol. 196, Number 14, Issue 3,768, April 6, 1987. (Printed on March 18, 1987.) Published weekly (except for combined issues dated Jan. 5 & 12, July 13 & 20, Aug. 10 & 17, and Sept. 14 & 21, 1987) at 1220 19th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036. Telephone (202) 331-7494. Leadership Network advertising (212) 684-5500. Yearly subscriptions, $56; foreign, $81; Canada, $70. Back issues, $2.50 (includes postage & handling).

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(ISSN 0028-6583). Second-class postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Indexed in Readers' Guide, Media Review Digest. Available on microfilm from University Microfilms Intnl., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106 and Bell & Howell, Old Mansfield Road, Wooster, OH 44691. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. Unsolicited manuscripts can be returned only if accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. **Subscribers:** Please send all remittances, changes of address, and subscription inquiries to **Subscription Service Dept., The New Republic, P.O. Box 56515, Boulder, CO 80322.** For subscription problems call **800-525-0643.**

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FROM WASHINGTON

Double Identity

Why should the conviction of two Americans caught spying for Israel revive old talk about the "dual loyalty" of five million patriotic American Jews? In part because that is the fate of Jews on this earth, even in America. In part because Jews (including this one) are characteristically among the first to worry a bone like this in public. And in part because the special relationship of Jews outside Israel to the Jewish state does require a bit of explanation. "Special relationship" doesn't mean treason: there's no decent explanation for that.

Until World War II, Zionism—the belief in a Jewish national homeland—was a minority taste among Jews. Most American Jews rejected the idea that Jews were a nation. America was a nation. Judaism was a religion. The founders of Zionism, by contrast, were resolutely secular. The Holocaust ended this interesting theoretical argument. But it didn't solve the seeming contradiction for American Jews who cherish Israel but have no desire to emigrate. Zionist zealots and anti-Zionist zealots both ask the same good question: How can you believe in the Jewish state and also believe that Jews can be full, normal citizens of other states?

The widely accepted answer is that America is a nation of nations. There is no one type of American and no one American interest. Our people are an ethnic melting pot and our politics are pluralistic. As Professor Oscar Handlin put it in the early days of this debate four decades ago: "The position of Israel with regard to Jewish Americans is . . . entirely similar to the position of Italy and Ireland with regard to Italian and Irish Americans."

This comforting theory doesn't really describe Israel's importance to many American Jews or America's importance to Israel. There are theoretical problems, too. Most nations are not ethnic melting pots, though they have ethnic minorities. Is "dual loyalty" a more legitimate question for Jews in Britain or France? Ironically, while a theory of ethnic pluralism makes it easier to explain American Jewish support for Israel, it makes it harder to explain Israel itself: a nation based, like the old nations of Europe and elsewhere, primarily on ethnic principles.

Then, too, pluralism is not America's only political tradition. Our historical sense of American exceptionalism, and of the special needs of a melting-pot nation, has led to a special fear of "foreign entanglements." In his Farewell Address, George Washington warned against "passionate attachments" to foreign countries and spoke of "deluded citizens, who devote themselves to the favorite nation . . . gilding with the appearances of a virtuous sense of obligation . . . the base or foolish compliances of . . . infatuation."

A second answer to the "dual loyalty" question is that there is only a single loyalty to values that Israel and America share: democracy, freedom, and so on. American nationalism, unlike most other kinds, is primarily about such values, and protecting Israel is one way to serve them. If America and Israel ever came into fundamental conflict—which is almost impossible to imagine—it would have to be because one or the other had betrayed its most fundamental values, which would make the choice between them easy.

This argument is also comforting but a bit facile. Shared political values strengthen the bond between Israel and all Americans. But American patriotism is not really so bloodless and analytical, nor is the Jewish love of Israel, nor is American Jews' passion for both nations.

A third, less comforting, answer to the "dual loyalty" question is that we are all guilty of not just dual but multiple loyalties. What's more, these loyalties do in fact conflict with and detract from one another. But only a totalitarian or a vulgarian would insist that the loyalty of citizenship must always "come first," whatever that means.

E. M. Forster is held in contempt for saying he would betray his country before he would betray a friend. This is considered the epitome of effete intellectual decadence. But suppose Forster had said "wife" or "child" (he had neither, of course) instead of "friend." Perhaps a man should be prepared to betray his family before his country, but no one would claim it's an easy question.

And in everyday life, where the melodramatic question of "betrayal" does not arise, all of us constantly make choices that subordinate the interests of the state to other loyalties: religious, ethnic, local, familial. And why not? That's one of the things America is about.

Of course it gets touchier when the competing loyalty is to another nation. If it came to "betraying" America or Israel, the vast, vast majority of American Jews would betray Israel, and the Israelis know it. Even if it turned out there were 50 Pollards, that would say nothing about the loyalty of five million people (though it would say some unhappy things about Israel). You could probably find 50 Irish-Americans willing to spy for Albania.

Nevertheless, the emotional attachment of American Jews to Israel undeniably complicates their attachment to their own country. That's OK. Life is complicated. American Quakers refuse to serve their country in the military. Jehovah's Witnesses refuse to salute the flag. This puts them outside the mainstream in ways they just have to live with. Some nations try to make this hard. America, God bless it, tries to make this easy. But it will never be painless.

As many have noted, in some ways it is America that has become the Jewish promised land. By any objective standard, sadly, Jews are physically safer and freer to thrive here than in Israel. But sneery Israelis are right that Jewish Americans will always bear a burden of outsiderness that citizens of the Jewish state don't. They will always be taking the temperature of anti-Semitism like a worried parent, and always be finding a slight fever (though never, I suspect, a severe one). They will always cringe when an Ivan Boesky or a Martin Siegel gets arrested.

The challenge of outsiderness can be ennobling. It drives many Jews to be better Americans—harder working, more generous to charities, more civically involved than the average citizen. It also can be emotionally degrading, as when Jews worry about being "too obvious" in social behavior or political life, and when they feel they must prove themselves by being the loudest to denounce the Pollards or the Rosenbergs. If any American Jew claims to be free of such anguishes, don't believe it.

On the other hand, there are worse fates.

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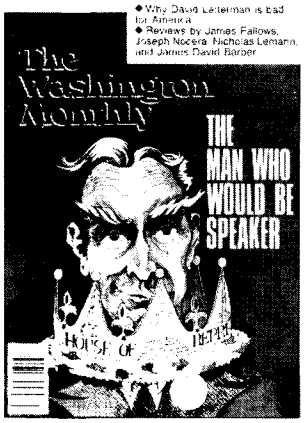
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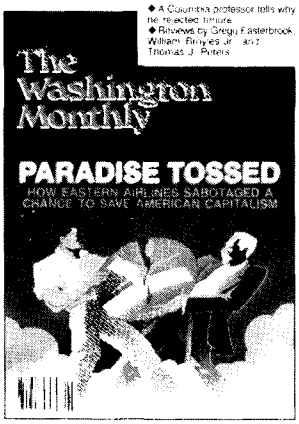
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THE EMOTIONS GIMMICK

To the editors:

Robert Kuttner, writing about the technical prowess of our national political committees, states, "In the 1980s, politics has been eerily disconnected from people's material lives—a quest for themes that resonate emotionally" ("Fat and Sassy," February 23). On the contrary, connecting emotional themes with the average American's daily life is exactly what has—had?—been the key to Ronald Reagan's success. Six years ago he captured the mood of this country when he stared into the living rooms of millions of Americans and asked, "Are you better off than you were four years ago?" Materially, and with dampened nationalistic spirits, Americans responded by saying "No," and by voting Reagan into office.

Reagan was able to match rhetorically what the Americans wanted since the '70s inflation and the Iran hostage crisis: pride in putting America back on top. But he only knew how to inspire people with a glitzy public relations campaign. Reagan's luck has finally been depleted drastically. Looking at Bitburg and Reykjavik, the Daniloff swap and his failure to mind the store during the Iran-*contra* affair, the American people are finally disappointed about where "America is Back" has really led them.

DENNIS P. JAFFE
New Brunswick, New Jersey

MEXICO MISHMASH

To the editors:

Morton Kondracke's "Revolution Mañana" (February 23) is more a mishmash of chats and data gleaned from a couple of superficial encounters in Mexico City than a thoughtful (or documented) essay about our southern neighbor. And there are a couple of loose threads as well. First, Kondracke leads us to believe "there are 111 opposition members in the 400-seat Chamber of Deputies." Any student of Mexican government knows that fully 100 of those minority members are not elected and, rather, represent a limp attempt by Partido Revolucionario Institucional to create the facade of democratic debate. Second, the lone word printed in Spanish—*machiladora*—is spelled incorrectly. The word is *maquiladora*.

KEITH ROSENBLUM
Arizona Daily Star
Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico

NO TASTE FOR PORK

To the editors:

Recently I gave Crocker Coulson information about two grants he was interested in that had been awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention ("A Taste for Pork," March 2). I deny making the statements attributed to me with reference to the model juvenile code produced by the American Legislative Exchange Council. I never characterized the code as either good or bad because, obviously, it is neither. The model code is a product shaped by the grantee's philosophy and must be considered in such light.

JOHN W. LAWTON
Deputy Director, Office of Congressional and Public Affairs
Department of Justice
Washington, D.C.

To the editors:

Crocker Coulson has me opining that the "Commentaries on Justice" series is "probably a waste of money." I said no such thing. To have said this would have been incredibly stupid, even if I believed it, which I don't. Given the high caliber of the speakers and commentaries, I am proud to have the series as a Radio America program. I certainly don't think it is a waste of money.

JAMES C. ROBERTS
President, Radio America
Washington, D.C.

Crocker Coulson replies:

Although part of my conversation with Mr. Lawton was off the record, his evaluation of the grant to the American Legislative Exchange Council was for attribution and was rendered accurately. When I asked Mr. Roberts whether, as a conservative, he favored the continuation of government programs like "Commentaries on Justice," he replied: "It would be nice if Congress would defund [these programs] but that is simply not going to happen." When I pressed him about his own grant, he said, "This one could be done away with." In my article I paraphrased this as "Roberts allows that the program is probably a waste of funds." This seems an accurate summary of Roberts's sentiments, ridiculous as it may appear in light of his actions.

'RYE' OBSERVATIONS

To the editors:

Andrew Delbanco's review of J. D. Salinger's suit to block publication of Ian Hamilton's biography ("Holden Caulfield Goes To Law School," March 9) is marred by its rather dismissive tone. Delbanco's beef with Salinger, I take it, is that his fictional world is dated. Unlike Mailer and Updike, he has not anticipated and guided public tastes: the reading public has justly left him behind to molder resentfully in New Hampshire. This view of Salinger, however, is shallow.

The Catcher in the Rye endures as an important, popular novel not because it touches "urban/suburban middle-class" anxieties, but because it articulates a spiritual ambition Holden senses he will not find satisfied in the world he inevitably has to enter—an anxiety of a more universal source. It is hardly surprising that the writer who created Holden Caulfield would eventually become disillusioned with a literary world that would lionize Mailer and Updike, whose respective fascinations with violence and adultery undeniably sell books, but have about as much to say about the good life as Rambo. Salinger's retreat is, therefore, explained just as well by a defensible dissatisfaction with the direction of popular literary tastes, and even an authentically monastic temperament, as it is by the mean-spirited suggestion that he is trying to punish his readers for growing out of liking his stuff.

THOMAS A. SMITH
Davis, California

To the editors:

Perhaps it is true that Holden Caulfield's wince and Alfred E. Neuman's smile "both tended to move within a curiously ambiguous locale," although the locale of Alfred E. Neuman's smile seems to me curiously irrelevant to almost any serious discussion of anything. As to the curiously ambiguous locale of Holden's wince, it seems to be curiously ambiguous only because Andrew Delbanco

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
APRIL 6, 1987

BEIRUT SPRING

During a 36-hour murder spree in Tripoli, Lebanon, last December, Syrian troops and their Lebanese allies killed more than 200 Sunni Muslims. This is according to an Amnesty International report released on March 13. The story made it onto page 16 of the *New York Times* and page 18 of the *Washington Post* (under a headline referring to Syrian "Abuses"). The *Times* carried a report of the massacre at the time it occurred, and if you don't remember reading about it, that tells you how prominent it was.

Arab victims are intrinsically more newsworthy, it seems, if they've been hit by Israeli bullets. In terms of news value, one Arab wounded by an Israeli soldier on the West Bank is worth more than a few hundred Arabs killed by their own anywhere else. This is not necessarily evidence of press bias: Arab fratricide is by now so commonplace, so routine, that it has become, yes, boring.

In the Arab world itself, news of another massacre hardly produces a yawn. And the perpetrators of this one, the Syrians, didn't even bother to deny it. Syrian officials boldly claimed to the U.N. Human Rights Committee on March 4 that this particular massacre of Lebanese in their own country by Syrians not in their own country was an act of self-defense. The truth is that the victims were mostly women and children, either slaughtered in the streets or locked up in buildings that were then blown up. In addition to the bodies discovered in mass graves or the Tripoli garbage dump, there are reportedly several hundred others who were taken away and have not been heard from since. Meanwhile, Amnesty International also fears for the lives of about 100 people detained on February 25 after the Syrians executed 23 Shiite Muslims (they were lined up against a wall and shot) in the Hezbollah strongholds of West Beirut. Sunnis in the North, Shiites in the South: the Alawite regime of President Hafez al-Assad is an equal-opportunity murderer.

Although the Shiites had been tormenting the Palestinians in southern Lebanon before the Syrians arrived in force this year, the Palestinians know better than to see salvation in this latest occupation. In Beirut a Syrian crackdown on Palestinians is expected to be the next shoe to drop. And they will find no new protector. Those who have been their off-and-on again tactical allies, like the Druze leader Walid Jumblatt, suspect by now that the Palestinian cage is one of the PLO leadership's own making—or at least of its own sustaining.

The other Arabs are coming to realize that a prudent and honorable compromise could have been reached with the Zionists years ago. It is reachable still, they believe. But they have seen the PLO's modus operandi in Lebanon, which seems designed to achieve only total triumph or martyrdom. Having lived under Yasir Arafat's rule from 1976 until the Israelis came in 1982, the people of southern Lebanon can be forgiven for preferring Palestinian martyrdom.

The deployment from Damascus has brought a certain uneasy calm to Beirut. But most Lebanese factions are apprehensive about the widened Syrian "peacekeeping" mandate. The massacres of December 20 and February 26 are not exactly reassuring. What has been done in the name of pacifying one militia can be done in the name of pacifying another. And what is Lebanon but an unsovereign territory—certainly not a nation—whose sectarian and ethnic enclaves are protected by contingently warring militias?

These apprehensions notwithstanding, the Syrian presence in Beirut frees the Amal militia for two chores, neither of which will be simple. First is the internecine struggle with the Iranian-backed Party of God for control of the Shiite patrimony in the South. This is one of those intrasectarian wars that the Syrians welcome, and they will not permit a decisive outcome. They want the Muslim ultras curbed, but not so severely as to alienate Iran or to give Amal too many big ideas of its own.

Second, Amal has now resumed serious skirmishing with Israeli and Israeli-armed troops near Lebanon's southern border, in order to restore its anti-Zionist credentials, which were tainted by its blockade and shelling of the Palestinian camps. But this too will be constrained from Damascus, which doesn't want the Israelis to feel so pressed that they might be tempted to some massive retaliation. Once again death will be calibrated according to some arcane Syrian political calculation.

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But the development almost everyone awaits is the coming Syrian sweep against the PLO redoubts in the Palestinian neighborhoods and camps. Assad can be expected to do to Arafat's legions—and to the civilian sea in which they swim, as classical guerrilla theory has it—what Nabih Berri's Amal attempted and failed, and to do it more ferociously. Interlocutors have been vainly trying to persuade Arafat to get his troops out so that the hapless Palestinian innocents are not caught yet again in the inevitable cross fire.

Not only will Arafat not get out; he also has prevented old men, women, and children from getting out. From Tunis or Baghdad or wherever he happens to be celebrating some international triumph, Arafat orders no retreat. His commanders are preventing Palestinian women from shopping in the Shiite neighborhoods lest the hunger and shortage of medicine in the camps be abated. Robert Fisk, a canny British observer in Beirut, wrote in the *Times* of London on March 14 that Arafat's insistence on allowing his supporters to suffer needlessly for propaganda purposes evokes long-established practices of the PLO.

What exactly do the two recent Syrian massacres have in common with Arafat's ongoing policy of courting disaster for his own people? It is a tragic but inescapable fact that politics in the Middle East today are governed by extraordinarily barbarous norms of conduct. The events of recent months are not idiosyncratic or exceptional. It is thus not surprising that Israel, seeing how Arabs treat each other, may have lurid and not unjustified imaginings of how the Arabs, if they had half a chance, would treat the Jews. This does not at all condone Israel's heavy-handedness and much worse in pursuing its security concerns, and it certainly does not diminish the peril in which this treacherous behavior puts Israeli democracy and its relationship to the United States. But it does put it a bit into perspective.

Notebook

☐ SLEAZEBALL WATCH: The final passage of tax reform, coupled with the backlash against Michael Deaver's flagrant influence-peddling, created a lull of sorts in the Washington lobbying scene. Now there are indications that business is picking up again. The latest meal ticket for the influence trade is anti-takeover legislation. "This boils down to a contest between Main Street and Wall Street," says Senate Banking Committee Chairman William Proxmire. Maybe so, but K Street is right in the thick of it, too. As Monica Langley reports in the *Wall Street Journal*, corporations and investment banks are already recruiting big-name former officials to represent their respective sides of the issue. Drexel Burnham Lambert alone has hired the law firms of former Democratic National Chairman Robert Strauss and former Indiana Senator Birch Bayh, as well as former SEC Commissioner John Evans and former Reagan campaign press aide James Lake. One of our readers, Kim Davis of Chappaqua, New York, suggests a way for Democratic presidential candidates to turn the sleaze issue to their advantage. Each should simply announce that nobody will be offered a major post in his administration unless that person first pledges not to go into influence-peddling, broadly defined, after leaving office. This would ensure that the next president and his aides come to Washington to take care of the people's interests, not their own.

☐ DEPARTMENT OF MODESTY: Leon Wieseltier, TNR's literary editor, has been named a recipient of the Olive Branch Award for outstanding coverage of the nuclear arms issue, presented jointly by the Editors' Organizing Committee, the Writers' and Publishers' Alliance for Disarmament, and the New York University Center for War, Peace, and the News Media. The award is in recognition of two articles, "The Ungrand Compromise" (November 17, 1986) and "Madder than MAD" (May 12, 1986).

THE MONEY CULTURE

Chartists

BACK WHEN I followed the horses seriously, I became obsessed with a certain pattern that would pop up in the past-performance charts in the *Daily Racing Form*. I called it the "famous Z," and (to simplify) it involved a horse winning one race, doing very poorly in the next (the descender of the Z), and winning the next. Under the "famous Z" theory, the zigzag would not continue; instead, the horse was ready to win race number four in the series. The theory ignored such factors as the condition of the horse, its competition in the races, its jockey, its time in winning and losing, the state of the track, etc. Instead, I learned to skim the *Racing Form*, looking for this specific numerical pattern, the "Z."

Did the theory work? Sometimes yes, but mostly no. Other horseplayers had their own methods, also based on numerology rather than on what might be called "fundamentals." These methods, some of them incredibly complex, would work for a time, then fail, and then the handicapper would find another method.

Numerical-pattern systems are attractive because they proceed from the assumption that we can crack the code, that we can figure out the Great Design of creation. I used to believe that there was such a horse-racing code (not the "famous Z," alas) to be found. If I could only find it, I would be rich and, more important, the clockwork universe would become manifest.

I was reminded of the "famous Z" theory the other day while reading the *New York Times*. The Dow Jones industrial average, after floating along, hitting new highs week after

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week, fell 20 points on March 9. In fact, early that day, it was off 30 points. Why? "Many traders," said the *Times*, "attributed the fall to statements made on Friday by Robert Prechter . . . [who] told clients of his telephone advisory service late Friday that a correction was approaching in the stock market." Prechter operates on something fairly similar to the "famous Z" theory.

The power to move the stock market is an impressive thing. Not even Ronald Reagan has it these days. So it might be interesting to meet this fellow Robert Prechter. He is a young guy who lives on a lake in Georgia and looks like the actor Jeff Daniels. Prechter, who writes an expensive and popular newsletter, is what is called a "technical market analyst."

Technical analysts are not concerned with a company's balance sheet or its business prospects. Instead, they follow numbers and charts, looking for patterns in individual stocks and in the market as a whole. They don't care whether the country is in a boom or a recession or whether Unisys makes fighter jets or swizzle sticks. They only care about curves and lines. "A pure chartist is almost monklike in dedication, believing the essential truth about the market is to be found in squiggles and figures on graph paper," wrote Vartanig G. Vartan in the *Times* years ago. "He is unmoved by a plant explosion or a profit explosion."

The world of stock-pickers is divided between fundamentalists (the equivalent of handicappers who are concerned about a horse's condition, competition, and jockey) and technicians. Benjamin Graham, king of the fundamentalists, calls the technicians' approach, with its charts and formulas, "fallacious." Fallacious it undoubtedly is. But also very enticing in its looniness. Technicians see things in charts that the rest of us miss. They see, for example, the "head and shoulders" pattern. A stock (or the market as a

THE ZEITGEIST CHECKLIST

BY CHARLES PAUL FREUND

This Week		Last Week	Weeks on Chart
1. BABY TALK		—	1

Vatican. The Vatican's condemnation of new reproductive technologies is a dog-bites-man story. It does introduce a moral angle, and that's a real novelty here. The national reflex is to bypass philosophy, and to empathize with science's beneficiaries. Though the press often reduces this process to soap opera, it's more significant than that: a sign of the culture's deep-rooted pragmatism.

2. MILK, HONEY, AND TEFLON		—	1

Israel. The Pollard affair is costing Israel. *Newsweek*'s recent labeling of Israel as a "Teflon nation" both reflects and encourages changes in U.S. thinking about that country. The label threatens to harden into a new stereotype, and that won't be easy to overcome. Getting Teflonized not only indicates falling popular esteem, it has comic overtones, which is even worse.

3. VANISHING ADOLESCENTS		—	1

Teen suicide. A self-conscious media is treading gingerly on the story of pact suicides by teens in New Jersey and elsewhere. TV's fear of doing anything that might be construed as inspiring copycat suicides is clearer than what is causing the attempts in the first place. Speaking of teen suicide, see number 6.

4. SEMPER FIFTH		1	20

Iranamok. Iranamok has slowed to a *Sitzkrieg*, with the big question being when North and Poindexter will be granted immunity and come out from behind the Fifth. The president developed amusing voice problems and virtually disappeared twixt his successful mea culpa TV speech and his rare press conference, enveloping himself in the proferred goodwill of a public tired of thinking about the scandal.

5. A STAR IS BORNE		—	1

Nova. Coming in the wake of such heavily marketed fizzles as comets Kahoutek and Halley, the surprise supernova of 1987 restores some perspective to a now-hypable cosmos. As one astronomer has noted, the death of this star is, in the greater scheme of things, the major event of the year.

6. LAND OF THE RISING SONS	*		5

Competitiveness. A consensus is forming that what's wrong with our schools is that they aren't Japanese. We lack rigor, drive. Achievement to them means honor, to us, filthy lucre, etc. But before competitive-think set in, it was a cliché that failure to Japanese students too often meant suicide. True or not, the currency of that notion was a sign of our sense of cultural superiority, a sense that is now rapidly ebbing.

7. BEATING AROUND BUSH	*		4

1988. Presidential is as presidential does. Bush's recent above-the-fray posture is fascinating. He pointedly made himself too busy to join other GOP hopefuls at a recent New Hampshire Republican dinner, swooping in just in time to deliver the keynote speech, and then exiting entourage in tow. Indeed, he's acting serene about Iranamok, even cracking jokes about it. It's too early to tell if this approach will work, but it doesn't seem to be hurting any.

8. SCREEN PASS		—	1

NFL. The move of some NFL games to cable is a bigger deal, in social terms, than network news cutbacks are. For one thing, it normalizes cable. It also brings closer the day when national rituals (e.g., the Super Bowl) will belong to pay TV. McLuhanesque types have speculated about the future development of a media-deprived class made up of those who can't afford the monthly fee. Important sports events on cable would create that.

9. SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL		—	1

Cars. Nash nostalgia has blossomed (thanks to the AMC sale) just as cheap, tiny cars are making a huge comeback. Not since the Beetle redefined "entry-level" cars has there been such a scramble for the market. Yugos, Hyundais, Precises, Foxes, Justies, and other sub-$6,000 models are expected to have 13 percent of the market by '88; in '85, cheap little cars accounted for one percent. By the way, the cars are all assembled in the Third World or Eastern Europe.

10. THE HYPE OF THE LOCK		—	1

Minoxidil. Is it real, or is it Minoxidil? Or rather, Regain, as Upjohn's new baldness remedy will be known in the pharmacies. The stuff is supposed to work, too. Don't you wish you'd bought Upjohn stock five years ago?

*Item resurfaces in the Zeitgeist after at least one week's absence.

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back up to a higher peak, then down, then up a bit. Draw this pattern on a piece of paper and you get something that looks like a head and shoulders. If the stock price drops from the third peak, chartists believe it will drop very sharply. Then, there is the "reverse head and shoulders," in which the last leg is bullish. Also: flags, pennants, wedges, gaps, saucer bottoms, coil bottoms, spike tops—great Rorschach formations on the page.

Rarely are these formations perfectly symmetrical, so not all chartists read the same curves the same way. "There is nothing wrong with the charts, only the chartists," goes a Wall Street saying. In other words, the answer is there—as I used to believe it was in horse racing—if only we're clever enough to see it the correct way.

The particular patterns that obsess Prechter, the market-mover, take the shape of something called the Elliott Wave. It was named after R. N. Elliott, an accountant who published a series of articles in 1939 that linked what he saw as cycles in the stock market with cycles that were observed in nature by a 13th-century Italian mathematician, Leonardo Fibonacci.

What Fibonacci discovered was a series of numbers that had fascinating properties. (Well, he thought they were fascinating, anyway.) The series, writes Martin J. Pring in his serious tome *Technical Analysis Explained*, "is derived by taking the number 2 and adding it to the previous number in the series. Thus 2 + 1 = 3, then 3 + 2 = 5, 5 + 3 = 8 . . . etc. The series becomes 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55, 89 . . ." It shows up all over the place, says Pring: "For example, a sunflower has 89 curves, of which 55 wind in one direction and 34 in the opposite direction. In music, an octave comprises 13 keys on a piano, with 5 black notes and 8 white . . ." The Fibonacci series is also said to appear in the progression of rings on an elephant's tusk and in the number of bumps on a pineapple.

Now, you're probably wondering what all this has to do with the stock market. Elliott, the Fibonacci fanatic of 50 years ago, "noted in an 80-year period that the market moved forward in a series of five waves, and then declined in a series of three waves. He concluded that a single cycle comprised eight waves." And—get this!—3, 5, and 8 are Fibonacci numbers.

Elliott, in studying the stock market, found little cycles (or waves) and big cycles. (And, obviously, you can find as many cycles as you want, depending on when you start counting.) The biggest cycle he called "the Grand Supercycle." It began around 1800, and we are supposed to be in the last mighty upward wave right now.

TWO MONTHS ago, Prechter, who writes a newsletter called the *Elliott Wave Theorist*, told *Barron's* that the current wave would carry the Dow "up into that 3600-plus area"—though there will be downers along the way, including the one he told his subscribers about in early March. After hitting 3600, we're in for a 60-year depression. Prechter had an exceptional year in 1986—old Fibonacci was hitting them on the nose. So it was natural, I guess, that when he said to sell, the market would drop.

The *Barron's* interview with Prechter produced a large volume of mail, some of it as esoteric as Prechter's own preachings. M. Friedman, the publisher of the *Sigma Index*, in Mission Viejo, wrote to complain: "In our opinion, the depression years of 1929 and 1932 may very well have been a Grand Supercycle Wave II instead of Wave IV as Prechter postulates. Wave IIs retrace most of Wave I . . ." etc., etc. Feuding technicians sound like feuding Marxists.

Prechter is only the latest in a long line of technicians who enjoy a vogue and then burn out. The best known is Joe Granville, who called some major market breaks, including one in January 1981, when he called his "hot-line" subscribers the night before and told them to sell all they owned. But Granville remained extremely bearish (short, in fact) as the great bull market got cranked up in 1982.

"The market," Granville tells his followers in revival-style lectures, "is a jealous God. It rewards winners and chastises losers. The Holy Bible is a record of winners and losers. The market follows every precept in that Book—if the market does not follow man's ways, what does it follow? God's ways. . . ."

Which, of course, is exactly the point that even more reasonable technicians such as Prechter are making. They have divined the market, literally. From sunspots and Fibonacci numbers, they have figured it all out. No wonder they can can move markets. For a while, anyway.

JAMES K. GLASSMAN

WASHINGTON SCENE

COMPUTER CONGRESSMEN

NEWCOMERS TO Washington are often struck by how much of the capital's culture is created not by elected officials but by a large, invisible, parasitic class of lobbyists, academics, journalists, and government workers. This group has little empathy for those who came to town because someone elected them. So it seemed like a useful social corrective when the National Association of Manufacturers invited 60 Washington hangers-on (including me) to test-drive Congressional Insight, a computer simulation game that "puts you in the role of a freshman congressman, with choices to make and consequences to face."

Developed by the Rose Institute of State and Local Government, a think tank affiliated with the Claremont Colleges in Southern California, the computer game subjects teams representing fictitious representatives to a variety of decisions on matters ranging from policy to local politics to relations with colleagues and staff. After each round, the teams receive computer-generated performance analyses from Washington and back home, party and interest-group ratings, and, as the term draws to an end, fund-raising re-

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ports. As in casino blackjack, teams play against the house rather than one another. At the end of 11 rounds, the computer tells each team whether it has been re-elected.

If you assume, as I did, that the point of this high-tech civics lesson was to promote public-spiritedness, you're a little off the mark. In a spacious conference room decorated with bunting, balloons, and an American flag, NAM president Sandy Trowbridge told the assembled group, "If we can put ourselves in [our representatives'] shoes, perhaps we're going to be more effective in dealing with them on a regular basis." Understand your congressman better and you can manipulate him better. Pondering this, I set to work with my team of six to establish a successful first-term incumbency within the two-and-a-half-hour time limit.

OUR computer-generated candidate was David Clark, a 47-year-old Republican who turned to politics after a successful career in real estate. Though he had spent $425,000 on his first race (including $100,000 from business PACs), it had been a squeaker. In a rural, timber-cutting district that was only 38 percent Republican, Clark was a staunch conservative who carped about "self-righteous environmentalists" and promoted a strong defense. Clark supported a balanced budget amendment and deplored Congress's inability to cut "wasteful" social programs, but our literature provided no clue as to which programs he would cut—a nice touch of verisimilitude. Sizing up our man's position, Ardon Judd, a thickly bespectacled, hard-headed lobbyist for Dresser Industries, concluded: "We need to move as far left as possible." His teammates solemnly concurred.

Our first decisions were easy. Whom to consult about which committee assignments to go for: Lobbyists? His campaign committee? Nope—his state's delegation. Whom to back for chair of the congressional campaign committee: Hubbard, the conservative "extremist," or Fisk, the "pragmatist"? The pragmatist, of course. Who heads the Washington staff: eager but inexperienced campaign workers, supporters from back home, or Washington insiders? Insiders, naturally.

Some dissent emerged over which caucuses to join. Dorothy Gusler, a lobbyist for Amax, Inc., proposed that Clark join the environmental caucus; I argued that even liberal constituents would find that opportunistic. "Constituents are dumb," Gusler assured me. Meanwhile, Greg Schneiders, a political consultant who commanded strong team respect in spite of his participation in John Glenn's 1984 presidential campaign, was eyeing the pharmaceutical and nuclear energy caucuses: "This guy takes PAC money, right?" Eventually we settled, responsibly, on foreign policy. Except for some snippy editorials back home about the staff being "too removed" from the district, all early decisions were well received by the computer.

Gradually, though, choices got tougher. Did Clark dare vote against $600 million in farm aid? No. But some local groups called this hypocritical in light of our stand on the budget, and forestry interests were irked that Clark didn't offer a similar bailout to them. (We'd guessed that some of the money would go for timber. Even the most assiduous pandering can backfire.) Does Clark attend a bill-signing ceremony or help a constituent who's battling with the Social Security Administration? Help the constituent, of course. But the Washington press noted his absence from the signing, and the SSA accused him of meddling.

The thought that Congressman Clark should spend any time on basic legislative research was quickly dismissed. "I don't think you should do basic research anytime," said Howard Pyle, a genial lobbyist for Houston Lighting and Power. He explained that someplace like the Congressional Research Service or the Heritage Foundation would take care of that. I grimaced when a costly and useless Army Corps of Engineers project for the district won the team's unanimous approval. "This is no time to get squeamish," Schneiders told me. Then Gusler quieted my concerns about Clark's lack of substance. In your first term, Gusler said, "You get the pork and you take care of constituents. That's it."

Even when he tried to do the right thing, Congressman Clark had a tendency to screw it up. When the doctors lobbied against a health care cost control bill, our team decided to ignore them. But Lee Ann Elliott of the Federal Election Commission, our otherwise briskly efficient team leader, checked the wrong box. "We finally tried to vote our conscience and we couldn't find it," Schneiders noted. Constituents were aghast, but when election time came, Clark managed a narrow 50.4 percent victory over his Democratic opponent.

IT'S HARD not to be impressed with the ingenuity that went into the software for Congressional Insight. Ingesting data and spitting out decisions and reactions at breakneck speed, the computer managed to create a reasonably accurate feel for the frantic, what-did-I-just-vote-for life of the rookie representative. To the extent it made those of us on the fringes of that world experience that desperate pace, it seemed a laudable civic exercise.

On the other hand, anyone who has ever played Monopoly knows that some games bring out the worst in people. David Rohn, NAM's associate director, says that while NAM is marketing software for the game to universities and even some congressional staffs, its primary purpose is to promote "corporate grass-roots" efforts, such as greater participation in company PACs. So it's probably no accident that Congressional Insight promotes a special-interest view of politics that is even more cynical than reality.

In real life, politicians can occasionally get away with voting against a constituency's interest for the sake of some higher good. In NAM's version, every action has an equal and opposite reaction. In real life, voters often steer clear of interest group affiliation—even party affiliation. In NAM's version, there is no such thing as an independent. In real life, a politician can occasionally redefine the political calculus by appealing to the voters' idealism. In NAM's version, that does not compute.

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Still, Congressional Insight's picture of political life isn't entirely inaccurate. Take NAM's most recent newsletter calling for opposition to bills on acid rain, campaign finance reform, a minimum wage, and mandatory notification of plant closings. You can argue the merits of each position, but no one will deny that, taken together, they constitute the concerns of only one narrow slice of society. The same could be said of the AFL-CIO's mirror-image positions. Often, the job of a representative is to choose which agenda he or she finds less odious. In this sense, NAM's computer-simulation Congress says less about the creative applications of software technology than it does about the mechanistic nature of interest-group politics. Computers haven't become more like congressmen. Congressmen have become more like computers.

TIMOTHY NOAH

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How presidents hijack democracy.

PERSONAL POLITICS

PERHAPS IT IS inevitable that every political crisis will be seen as a failure of individuals. The Iranamok drama has been portrayed as such, both in media accounts and in the report of the Tower Commission. At the same time, however, every historical event can be viewed in terms of the system that allows, if not provokes, it. In the case of Iranamok, there is good reason to deal with systemic issues. The similarities to Watergate are so clear that such issues are hard to overlook.

The form of political organization one almost instinctively associates with modern society is bureaucracy. But even Max Weber, the great theorist of bureaucracy, saw clearly that these uniquely modern "impersonal machines" would never function by themselves. It was for this reason, on the cold-blooded grounds of rational efficiency and, ultimately, realpolitik, that Weber believed in the necessity of democracy.

Bureaucracies are rational and efficient, but only in the pursuit of objectives that have already been set. Hence Weber's famous observation that bureaucracies are always non-bureaucratic at the top. Because they can't set their own goals, because they are impersonal and rule-following, bureaucracies ultimately are inflexible and unresponsive. The exigencies of political leadership, by contrast, demand flexibility—the capacity to manage situations that are new and unclear, to set innovative and sometimes radical goals, and to establish new administrative mechanisms.

But strong leaders may get the job done too well. As charismatic figures, they are too much the bureaucrat's antithesis. They tend to confuse their personal ambition with the demands of society, and become less effective as a result. From a purely practical point of view, this is why democracy is necessary. While allowing the kind of personal leadership that is the necessary antidote to bureaucratic administration, democracy ties this leadership to control by the public, which is articulated by constitutional restraints and ultimately enforced by the ballot.

Thus modern mass democracy rests on a contradiction. It unleashes highly charged personalistic leadership, with all the ferocious ambition and Machiavellian force this implies. Yet it binds leaders to a representative role, insisting that they allow themselves to be constrained by law, custom, and reciprocal obligation.

Different systems handle this combustible mixture, which Weber actually called "Führer democracy," in different ways. Parliamentary democracies try to minimize personal authority, tying leaders closely to parties. Yet even in parliamentary systems leaders can arise whose charismatic appeal allows them to exercise personal dominion. Presidential democracies such as that of the United States, on the other hand, maximize personal authority. This increases responsiveness, but also increases the possibility of runaway leaders.

Democratically elected presidents rule "in the name of the people," but they have a habit of interpreting this intended constraint as a mandate for personal rule. Presidents are not only *tempted* to view the people's will in terms of their personal goals. They *must* do so. The effective president articulates his own goals first, then finds the mandate for carrying them out. If he doesn't get it immediately, he won't abandon his goals, for there is always a possibility that public opinion can be brought into line through persuasion, education, or even manipulation. Leaders tend to believe this is more likely if a temporarily unappreciated policy is actually allowed to bear fruit. So policy and government go underground. Presidents and their staffs do so in the belief that once the policy is revealed (preferably after it has already succeeded, à la the Grenada invasion), the people will support it after the fact.

THIS DIALECTIC between democracy and deception, between public responsiveness and authoritarian control, is not the product of an imperialist foreign policy, an avaricious economic elite, or a particular demagogic leader. It is endemic to modern democratic systems. The executive machinery of modern democratic government is also the machinery of personal rule. Leaders are given a long leash to develop their political goals. They would be fools not to take it.

In Iranamok, the mechanisms of personal rule have become unusually transparent. Americans were shocked to see how the secret machinery of government was dedicated to personal presidential projects, which were launched in the confident belief that the ultimate success of the plan would in the end be accepted as a justification for the deception that made it possible. It is surprising that Ronald Reagan, the master of personalistic rule, was so

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clumsy as to allow the curtain to rise before the scene could be played, and that he was working with such a contrived script. There is nothing anomalous, however, about the fact that the scene was being prepared behind a curtain in the first place. This is not a cynical view of democracy, just a realistic one.

JEFFREY C. ALEXANDER

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Slipping down the 'Margarine Maypole.'

RAG TIME

IT IS A magazine that demands much of its contributors:

> We're looking especially for the well-developed tale with thematic depth, skillful characterization, wit, dramatic change, and imaginative symbolism. We discourage experimentation unless it is suitably incorporated into a strong, traditional narrative. Some of the authors we admire for the most part include John Collier, Roald Dahl, Flannery O'Connor, Kurt Vonnegut, Franz Kafka, and Mark Twain. We're always in the market for realistic narratives laced with horror or the fantastic, in the manner of William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily," or John Cheever's "The Enormous Radio."

The journal is not the *New Yorker*, the *Atlantic Monthly*, or *Harper's*, but the *New Oregon Review*. Rejecting out of hand poems "encumbered with Cummingsesque affectation," the publisher, Steve DiMeo, keeps his eyes peeled for verse of "exceptional merit" by "established writers" that "attempt, in the Emily Dickinson tradition, to domesticate the universe." He also favors work in the rich tradition of "W. B. Yeats, Robert Frost, T. S. Eliot, E. A. Robinson, W. H. Auden, and Theodore Roethke." He pays $10 a poem.

The *New Oregon Review*, with a circulation of 300, is one of the thousands of literary magazines whose contributors' guidelines are published in annual or semiannual guides such as *Fiction Writer's Market* and *Writer's Market* (published by Writer's Digest Books), and the *International Directory of Little Magazines and Small Press* (Dustbooks). In these pages one finds special-interest publications as diverse as *Art Hazards Newsletter*, the *Institute of Noetic Sciences Newsletter*, the *Celibate Woman's Journal*, and the *Journal of Polymorphous Perversity*, but most of the magazines are literary, or quasi-literary, in orientation. Since I've had dozens of short stories published in literary magazines, writing this story makes me feel like an Irishman telling an Irish joke. Actually, I am an Irishman. Let's drop the analogy right there, before things get really out of hand.

Paging through these directories, one gets two general impressions: that Joyce Carol Oates submits material to every magazine on the planet; and that for a good number of magazines, more effort has gone into naming them than worrying about their contents. *Lobster Tendencies East*, *Local Drizzle*, the *Devil's Millhopper*, and *Bile* all sound more outrageous than they are, as do *Bogus Review*, *Pig in a Pamphlet*, the *Goofus Office Gazette*, *Industrial Sabotage*, *Grinning Idiot*, and the *Margarine Maypole Orangoutang Express*. Indeed, a pervasive sense of rehearsed insolence is present in many of these "guerrilla presses," among them *Bug Tar*, *Artpolice*, the *Atavist*, and *Beatniks From Space*. In their efforts to *épater la bourgeoisie*, some folks can't settle for just one handle; the Good Gay Poets Press also puts out a magazine called *Fag Rag*, and the periodical *Elvis Car* is published by the Surrealist Poets Gardening Association.

Writer's guidelines for little magazines and small presses are idiosyncratic, to say the least. *Banana Rag* doesn't care what kind of materials its contributors submit as long as they mention bananas—anecdotally, as the dominant motif, or in an aside using an expression such as "top banana." *Dear Contributor* publishes a "rejection letter of the month," no mean feat for a quarterly. *Howling Dog* seeks material that is "similar to the howl of a dog with its foot caught on the fence, something that may not be pleasant or permanent, but will still be heard by everyone in the neighborhood until the time comes to unleash the poor beast." Cave Books only publishes material dealing with caves, and says that it recently went two years without a single submission. Maybe it should relax the guidelines to allow for arroyos, lairs, dens, and deserted underpasses.

The Lighting Herald: Un Journal de Poètes Terribles wants poetry that sounds like this:

> At the throne of Almighty God there is a great stone, and fast in the depths of it a wonderful and terrible blade, which to no man or woman save one is it given to remove and wield. The Arthurian legend is in fact an archetype of unspeakable power and vitality—albeit veiled in the swirling mists of foggy consciousness, and never truly interpreted or seen in clarity to this day. It is the sword of a poet-king, a prophet, a saint, a human.

The editor, Stephen M. Rafalsky, says, "If anyone feels like submitting, in light of the above, feel free." He lives in Woodstock, New York.

SOME OF the small presses, including one or two of the above, do not seem to take themselves terribly seriously. Others do. Michael Ambrose, editor of the *Argonaut* (circ. 500), "wants nothing that has been said before." The *Coe Review* does not want "sap" or "predictability," and audaciously tells writers, "Do not be afraid to experiment or to write intelligent fiction." The *Kansas Quarterly* "prefers excellent fiction."

The editors of *Ins & Outs* like writers who have been influenced by that reliable old troika, "Somerset Maugham, Apuleius, and Charles Bukowski." "We dare you to submit to us," they say, adding, "Take a deep breath and reread before mailing." They do not say a breath of what. *Permafrost*, published by the University of Alaska, tells contributors to "push the boundaries of art"; the

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Pikestaff Forum seeks material that "lifts us out of our chair"; and the *Pacific Review* wants "language that glows and bleeds and explodes" so that its 500 readers will experience "paroxysms of glee, fascination, terror, revulsion, transcendence." Don't forget the SASE.

The *Long Story* rejects all fiction with "bourgeois themes or about decadent upper-class people concerned about their trivial, self-indulgent, and egoistic sex lives, divorce problems, social or professional status, and so forth, while they ignore the sea of exploitation and despair and degradation of poor people and the under class that surrounds them." *Amelia*, the "high-quality magazine" that awards the annual Georgie Starbuck Prize for "light, humorous verse," not to mention the coveted Lucille Sandberg Haiku Award, says: "Neatness is always appreciated."

Fablewaves Press admits that it is biased toward the "innovative, contemporary, profound, stylish, energetic, bold, intelligent, allegorical, sensual, bizarre, humorous, and satirical." The editors point out that they are "trendsetters, not modest writers," whose "international reputation precludes considering favoritism, amateurism, cheap commercialism, or stiff boredom."

Writers should be disabused of the notion that small magazines are dumping grounds for their literary outtakes. Competition for publication in the *Ark River Review* (circ. 1,000) is "very tough," say the editors, and even competition to break into the somewhat less prestigious *Outerbridge* (circ. 700) is "keen." In the past few years literary magazines have published my story "The Dentures of Dorian Grey," an orthodontic version of the Oscar Wilde tale, not to mention a thriller about a hit squad of extraterrestrial commandos who destroy the City of Brotherly Love because the guffaws on TV talk shows every time someone mentions Philadelphia are reverberating across the universe, keeping everybody awake at night. Look what you're up against.

JOE QUEENAN

Joe Queenan is a free-lance writer based in Tarrytown, New York.

Contras, I.

INTO THE JUNGLE

DESPITE MORE bad news—the resignation of Arturo Cruz from the *contra* leadership, the Tower Commission's documentation of White House disarray, and a negative vote in the House on continued military aid—the *contra* cause isn't dead yet. The Reagan administration and the Nicaraguan resistance have six months in which to show enough military and political progress to pick up 17 votes in the House and win the $105 million the administration is requesting to keep the *contras* fighting through next year. There is not much prospect for famous victories in the struggle for Nicaraguan democracy. If that country ever gains its freedom, it will likely be through a long process of survival acts.

There are signs of progress on the military front. According to *contra* military commander Enrique Bermudez, 11,000 fighters have made their way into Nicaragua since early January despite Sandinista efforts to block them, and the total force of 15,000 will be inside in another month. Bermudez, who was in Miami over the weekend of March 14-16 for talks designed to settle the *contras'* uproarious political affairs, claimed that his forces are engaged in 60 combat actions per week with the Sandinistas. The administration, on the basis of what it says is independent intelligence, confirms the numbers, and the Nicaraguan government has issued even higher figures—350 clashes during the period from January 1 to February 5, and 330 from February 5 to March 5. To the charge that the *contras* can't or won't fight, the answer seems to be: they are fighting.

BERMUDEZ SAID his Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN) is fighting now to retake territory lost during the official cutoff of U.S. funds in 1986. "The Sandinistas want to keep contact with us, make us fight, waste our resources, and get exhausted. When we regain the initiative, we will start fighting where we want. That will be in about three months." The administration is claiming that during the first seven weeks of 1986, the *contras* destroyed 20 trucks, attacked 12 Sandinista barracks, blew up 12 power lines and three bridges, and temporarily closed two major roads. Neither the United States nor Bermudez would reveal casualty estimates. The Sandinistas say that 86 of their soldiers were killed in January and 71 in February, while they killed a total of 756 *contras*. They claim that 22 civilians have been killed this year.

Nicaraguan battle statistics may prove no more accurate than Vietnam body counts, but there are some independent suggestions that the *contras* are not simply a rag-tag force, as critics of administration policy claim. James LeMoyne of the *New York Times* and Peter Collins of ABC News spent two days with the *contras* inside Nicaragua late last month—the first time in two years that American reporters have been allowed to do so—and reported that morale and training seemed to be solid. Former Virginia governor Chuck Robb, who served as a Marine in Vietnam, just returned from a trip to Central America, including *contra* base camps, and is expected to report favorably on *contra* military prospects.

And the military effort got another boost in the form of a revised appraisal from retired Gen. Paul F. Gorman, former head of the U.S. Army Southern Command, whose critique of the *contras* in January was widely quoted by foes of administration policy. Gorman told the Senate Armed Services Committee on January 28, "I don't think [the Sandinistas] regard the *contras* as a serious threat. I think they've got the situation under control." He said he thought that because of inadequate CIA training, the *contras* were merely

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a "cross-border raiding force" that was unprepared to run a "sound unconventional warfare campaign" that could win support from the Nicaraguan population.

On February 24, however, Gorman issued a statement saying that he'd just visited Central America and concluded that "the Nicaraguan rebels of the FDN have a fighting chance to present to the Nicaraguan people an alternative to the oppressions and militarism of the government in Managua." He said he was impressed with the pace and extent of FDN infiltration and found its overall campaign plan sound. He said it would take "years" for *contras* to force the Sandinistas to hold free elections, and would not predict a final outcome. Success would depend, he said, on whether the *contras* can avoid large-scale engagements with the Sandinista army, and concentrate instead on reducing the government's control over the population and emphasizing political action to win popular support.

The administration asserts that it is dedicated to the idea of combining military and political action, but it has found it just as hard to get *contra* politics right as to win military funding from Congress. In February, with the resignation of FDN leader Adolfo Calero from the umbrella United Nicaraguan Opposition and the agreement of banker/diplomat Arturo Cruz to stay with UNO, the State Department was claiming victory in its effort to reform the *contras* and put "politicians" in charge of "the military." But then Cruz abruptly quit, announcing his resignation in a letter to the *Miami Herald* on the eve of a House vote on releasing the last $40 million installment on *contra* funding for this year, and just before the meeting with Bermudez in Miami to talk about reforms.

CRUZ AND his supporters claim that in spite of U.S. assurances, Cruz could not be sure that *contra* military leaders would respect civilian authority. They say that to undermine him, either the CIA or the FDN leaked to the press the fact that Cruz had received $7,000 a month from deposed White House operative Oliver North and that even State Department officials and Cruz's fellow UNO politicians told him to go slow in pressing for reforms. Cruz said in an interview that he had doubts about his role as early as 1985, when he was persuaded to become a *contra* leader. "I am not a politician," he said. "I have been trying to liberate myself." He said he intended to quit in early February, but was prevailed upon to stay for two months by his colleagues and by Assistant Secretary of State Elliott Abrams. When he saw that "dramatic action" to reform the movement would not be forthcoming, he decided to go for good.

He said he wanted a special commission to recommend procedures for setting up an expanded UNO Assembly to represent all factions of the resistance, and for Luis Rivas, a former anti-Somoza and anti-Sandinista *comandante* under Eden Pastora, to become chief of staff of the *contra* military. U.S. officials, furious with Cruz for quitting on the eve of the House vote, charge that he was unwilling to stay and work for the reforms or allow democratic processes to operate within the resistance. "He wanted things done his way, right away," one official said. "I had no idea he was this unreliable, this irresponsible."

Having built up Cruz as a democratic giant who could transform the *contras* into an army of freedom fighters and win backing for them in Congress and from the rest of the United States (not to mention Central America, Europe and his own Nicaraguan people), the administration was reduced to trashing him as "a flake." Opponents of administration policy, meanwhile, were heading in the reverse direction, building him up as the incorruptible man who wouldn't dissemble when he couldn't prevail. In fact, Cruz is just what he claims to be: a man with little stomach or talent for war or politics. As he made clear after his resignation, he still supports U.S. aid to the *contras*, opposes the Sandinistas, and will stay around to write and talk about *contra* reforms.

MEANWHILE, it's unclear where the reform process stands. Asked about submitting to the authority of Luis Rivas as chief of staff, Bermudez was unresponsive, asserting only that he was willing to meld the FDN into a unified national resistance under a joint staff. In meetings in Miami with UNO leaders Alfonso Robello and Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, he said, there was agreement on a plan to expand UNO to include Miskito Indian leaders, representatives of Nicaragua's various political factions, business and labor, and the Southern rebel movement, BOS. Alfredo Cesar, a BOS leader, is increasingly regarded as a major figure in *contra* politics.

Trying to look philosophically at the *contra* political mess, Abrams observed that the resistance consists of three basic groups of people dissatisfied with the Sandinistas—peasants (half the fighting force) who resent Sandinista land seizures and suppression of the Church, Atlantic Coast Indians who wanted to be left alone and weren't, and the urban middle class and elites who lost property and freedom. "UNO reform means trying to get those three to work together better. They never worked together before, which is why they had first Somoza and then the Sandinistas." He said that Calero was the only middle-class politician who bothered to spend time in camp with *contra* peasants, which accounts partly for Cruz's inability to take hold as leader of the movement. This is Abrams's way of saying he made a mistake in picking Cruz to replace Calero.

Difficult as things may be inside Nicaragua and within the *contra* movement, the cause is most vulnerable to the whims of Washington—the Democrats' propensity to cut off military aid and the administration's inability to manage and sell the policy. A CIA fiasco in mining Nicaraguan harbors led to a 1985 fund cutoff, which led the National Security Council staff to try to continue the flow by irregular and possibly illegal means, the exposure of which again threatens the funding. Congressional (that is, Democratic) probers of *contra* funding have targeted Abrams, a driving force behind administration policy, for allegedly knowing and lying about NSC aide Oliver North's activities. Some Republicans in Congress fear that North's boss, former

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national security adviser John Poindexter, may claim under immunity that he told President Reagan about *contra* funding. If that's documented (and it would have to be, given Poindexter's weak record for veracity), it might sink more than just Reagan's Nicaragua policy. It might sink his presidency.

Even if new Iranamok disclosures don't force an end to *contra* funding, its prospects are definitely dicey after the House's March 11 vote to suspend $40 million in *contra* aid until past expenditures are accounted for. The vote was 230-196, a switch of more than 20 votes since the House approved *contra* funding by 221-209 nine months ago. The administration and the *contras* will get their $40 million because any resolution to disapprove the money could be vetoed and the veto sustained. However, the House vote and the knife's-edge vote count in the Senate on the $40 million are bad signs for the administration's request of $105 million for next year, which will have to win a majority in both houses sometime before October.

BOTH SIDES in this struggle think they're going to win. House Majority Whip David Bonior says that "in the wings, two dozen people are waiting to get off this policy." Democratic leaders think it's significant that moderate former *contra*-aid supporters David McCurdy of Oklahoma and Les Aspin of Wisconsin voted against the $40 million—Aspin, apparently, as the price for being allowed to keep his Armed Services Committee chairmanship—and that *contra* support is now a partisan litmus issue. They also took encouragement from a statement by Republican leader Bob Michel that as matters stood, the Democrats had the votes to win and that the administration should embark on a new tack, emphasizing diplomatic efforts to end the Nicaraguan conflict.

After conservatives howled at Michel, his aides emphasized that he has always favored a three-track approach—supporting the *contras*, trying to talk to the Sandinistas, and giving aid to Central American democracies. His statement, though, seemed to be calculated as a warning that the administration would lose if it did not get cracking on the second two tracks. The Democrats are coming forward with a "positive" proposal to cut off military aid to the *contras*, provide "humanitarian aid" for their resettlement, back Costa Rican president Oscar Arias's plan for a cease-fire and elections in Nicaragua, and provide aid to the Central American democracies to help them resist Communist insurgencies and prevent the Sandinista revolution from spreading. House Majority Leader Tom Foley has said that since new military aid is not likely, the "responsible" administration policy would be to set up a "transition policy" for withdrawing the *contras*.

The administration is not buying that, and thinks it can win the votes necessary to reverse the 34-vote anti-*contra* margin in the House by following up on the Arias plan and ultimately forcing Democrats to cast a no-compromise "precipice vote." U.S. negotiator Philip Habib, working with allied Central American presidents, is supposed to try to persuade Arias to modify his proposal to provide for both a negotiated cease-fire between the *contras* and Sandinistas and a change in sequence so that it would not be more than a year (as Arias has proposed) between a cutoff of *contra* funding and free elections in Nicaragua. Foley said that the administration might well pick up votes if it made a good faith effort to negotiate, but Democratic members say they don't trust the administration not to torpedo talks and go for a military victory, as it has in the past.

Whatever its true intentions about negotiations, the administration does plan to play hardball with the Democrats. "Fifteen thousand kids will be fighting when the vote comes this fall," Abrams said. "I don't think the Congress will want to abandon them on the battlefield. The Democrats' strategy is to try and get us to adopt some 'transition' policy so we will do the abandoning for them. We are not going to do that. The president could not be more committed to this. We are not going to abandon the *contras*. Those who want to do so will have to say it and do it in the light of day." Administration officials say that the president, Secretary of State George Shultz, and national security adviser Frank Carlucci are all on board for the "precipice" strategy of doing nothing to help Democrats avoid full responsibility for their actions. White House chief of staff Howard Baker reportedly has not yet weighed in on the issue.

To make the precipice all the more fearsome for Democrats, the administration will try to make the case—as administration witnesses did before the Senate Intelligence Committee on March 17—that the future of all Central America probably rests on *contra* funding. The same argument was made by General Gorman in his February 24 statement. "Should Congress abrogate its commitment to the Nicaraguan rebels," he wrote, "governments of the four democracies in Central America are likely to be shaken. This is no 'domino theory,' but a realistic assessment of the fragility of those governments."

According to Gorman and officials of the administration, Communist insurgents in El Salvador would get both a morale boost and new Sandinista arms assistance if the *contras* were cut off, and frightened rightists in the military might well stage a coup against President Duarte, which could undermine U.S. support and lead to a Communist victory. Variations on the theme might occur in Honduras and Guatemala.

TO THE Democratic proposal that the United States provide aid to bolster the democracies and contain the Sandinistas after a *contra* cutoff, Gorman said that the financial costs probably would be more than Congress would be willing to sustain, and "more importantly, a strategy of containment may be self-defeating by destroying our political basis for commitment" because "some of the governments which could materialize in Central America in the wake of a U.S. turnabout may be authoritarian regimes hardly worthy of U.S. support and vulnerable themselves to Marxism."

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Gorman said, "It's my considered judgment that additional aid for the Nicaraguan democratic resistance is a small price to pay for preserving the gains realized in recent years by those we support in Central America, and for keeping open the prospect of a negotiated settlement." Denying aid "would jeopardize all that has been achieved there for democracy in recent years."

He went on to say that the larger issue was U.S. national strategy, not just 1987 aid levels. "I advocate that our strategic objective be pluralistic democracy for all Central Americans," and he recommended that the United States devote its "full power—our political influence, economic vigor, military strength, and moral authority—not for a few months, or for this session of Congress, but the foreseeable future. I urge that Congress adopt a comprehensive, long-range plan for aid for Central America which would convince friends and enemies alike that we are committed, that we intend to stay." Amen.

MORTON KONDRACKE

Contras, II.

PACK IT IN

THE PRESENCE of Arturo Cruz in the Nicaraguan *contra* leadership was vital to the Reagan administration's efforts to sell *contra* aid to Congress. Cruz, an articulate democrat whose principled opposition to both *somocismo* and *sandinismo* could not be questioned, was the kind of man moderate Democrats and other *contra* doubters felt comfortable with as a potential post-Sandinista president. Now that Cruz has quit the *contras* and denounced their leaders as anti-democratic, the *contra* sell has gotten more difficult, perhaps impossible. Aid to the *contras* may well be doomed.

Without U.S. support, the *contras* will collapse. And if the *contras* collapse, they'll take much of the Reagan Doctrine down with them. According to the doctrine, anti-Communist guerrillas in Soviet-dominated Third World countries were supposed to liberate their nations from tyranny, getting America's strategic dirty work done in the bargain. It was a low-cost way to reconcile America's noble wish for democratic development in the Third World with its muscular desire to overcome the Vietnam syndrome. Just as the Laffer curve promised inflation-free growth and balanced budgets through the painless expedient of a massive tax cut, so the Reagan Doctrine promised to contain communism and spread democracy without spilling a drop of Yankee blood. The natives would fight their own battles. All we had to do was supply the guns.

The Reagan Doctrine was the intellectual rationale for a kind of right-wing guerrilla chic that cast Arturo Cruz in the unlikely role of a democratic Che. He and other *contras* were hailed as heroes, "the moral equivalent of our own Founding Fathers," etc. Now, however, Cruz seems headed for the same fate as Eden Pastora. Pastora was the former Sandinista "Commander Zero" who enjoyed a brief period of hero status in Washington when he tried to raise a *contra* army on Nicaragua's border with Costa Rica. But his insistence on personal autonomy over his army ultimately led the CIA to dump him as "unreliable." You hardly ever hear his name in Washington anymore. Cruz, for his part, dumped the administration, and all of a sudden his imprimatur, too, is no longer vital to the legitimacy of the cause. The administration still advocates aid to the *contras*, no matter what Cruz says about the authoritarian tendencies of CIA favorite Adolfo Calero and former Somoza National Guard Col. Enrique Bermudez, the two leaders who still control the main *contra* army, the Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN).

Indeed, Cruz's democratic reputation, when staked to some of the statements he has been making about Calero and Company, has now become a threat to administration policy. So some conservatives have pitched in to trash that reputation. For example, former United Nations ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick slyly implies in a recent syndicated column that Cruz, "a technocrat" of "mercurial temperament," "had never been a reliable supporter of the Nicaraguan democratic resistance." Why, he had even "lived outside Nicaragua for 20 years" before the 1979 revolution—as if exile automatically diminishes patriotism. "Some," Kirkpatrick adds, "even thought Cruz and his supporters had sought control over the *contras* in order to negotiate their surrender to Managua. We will never know." Who are these "some"? And why didn't Kirkpatrick alert us earlier to this alarming latent disloyalty? We will never know.

Of course the notion that Arturo Cruz, or any of the other *contra* leaders, was some kind of democratic hero was pure Washington policy hype to begin with. Cruz is a decent man, and his belief in democracy is genuine. But as he himself would probably concede, he wasn't a decisive leader, or even a particularly good politician, much less a hero. He agonized before splitting with the Sandinistas, agonized again before joining the *contras*, then went through another protracted waffling before finally resigning.

THE INFLATED image of Cruz and the other *contra* "heroes" was of a piece with the broader made-in-Washington fantasy of a *contra* policy that could be free of the inevitable ugly costs and trade-offs associated with sponsoring war in the Third World. The same mentality gave us the idea of "human rights training" for the *contras*. The point is not that Arturo Cruz isn't a genuine democrat, or that the *contras* are everything their worst human rights critics say they are. Their brutality, however incorrigible it may be, is probably on a par with that of other guerrillas. The point is simply that guerrilla war is by nature a dirty business. The effort to sanitize—"reform"—the *contras*, in which the presence of Cruz in the *contra* leadership played a useful role, was basically just public relations.

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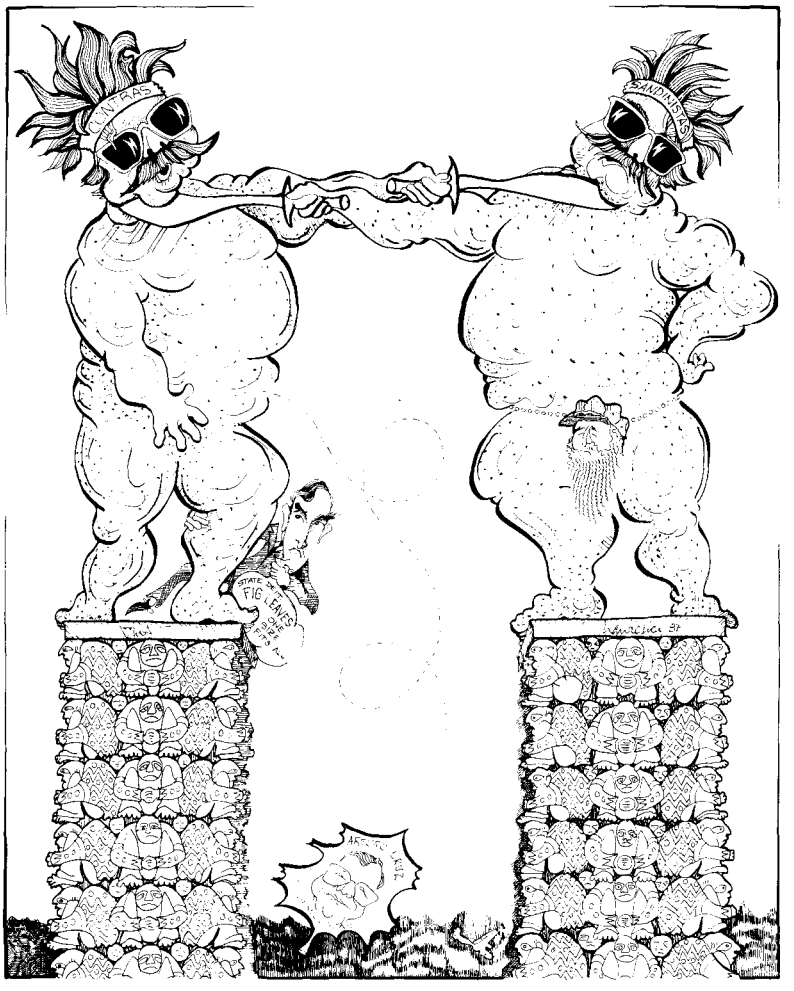
Cruz's withdrawal has the effect of stripping the Reagan Doctrine of its democratic pretensions. Indeed, Cruz's departure has recast U.S. options in all-too-familiar terms, terms the Reagan Doctrine was supposed to help us avoid. Once again we face a conflict between authoritarians and totalitarians—only this time it's the authoritarians who are trying to fight their way in from the hills. This may explain why conservatives of Kirkpatrick's stripe show apparent relief at his departure. At last we're back to an issue they can relate to.

How did we wind up back at square one? Even some of those who are hunkering down and joining Calero now sense that the *contras* after Cruz may well be doomed. They are preparing for the "Who lost Nicaragua?" debate. The emerging argument goes roughly like this: Cruz saw liberals using Iranamok to knife *contra* aid, and gave up on us. Now Cruz's resignation itself will be seized upon by these same liberals as a rationale for the coup de grace. Once again, American isolationism has let down Third World allies who were foolish enough to trust us.



DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

But this is no occasion to blame America first. Arturo Cruz himself doesn't. Yes, U.S. aid is critical to the *contras'* survival, and Cruz did cite U.S. inconstancy as a reason that he quit (though he placed about as much blame on hard-liners at the CIA who backed Calero's clique as he did on soft-liners in Congress who opposed the *contras* altogether). But, as Cruz was careful to point out, these were hardly the only, or even the most important, reasons the *contras* haven't been able to muster the internal cohesiveness and popular support necessary to make themselves into a credible democratic force. Who lost Nicaragua? Nicaraguans did.

In his letter of resignation, Cruz analyzed the *contras'* predicament—and his country's—in terms that implicitly evoked Nicaraguan history and political culture. That history has consisted almost entirely of brutal, corrupt tyranny punctuated by bloody civil war. One legacy of Nicaragua's violent past (and, indeed, of the violent past of much of Latin America) is a political culture leavened by only a modest strain of pluralism. Far more prominent in the minds of Nicaraguan politicians, Sandinista and *contra* alike, is the notion of political power as indivisible and unshareable. Power can be gained through ruthless maneuver, armed force, or both—but authentic compromise and peaceful reconciliation of competing interests are nearly unthinkable.

Cruz entered the *contras* with high hopes of breaking out of this "vicious circle of the past," which took its most recent turn after the 1979 revolution, when the Sandinistas squeezed out their civilian democratic coalition partners. For the *contras*, Cruz envisioned a "pluralistic structure in the service of an equally pluralistic cause." Instead, he discovered that the *contra* leaders were the moral equivalent of *Nicaragua's* "founding fathers"—the Spanish conquistadores. The Calero "*camarilla*" (clique), with its "habits of intolerance and exclusion," was still playing the old uncompromising, power-grabbing game. Calero seemed as intent on squeezing out Cruz as he was on defeating the Sandinistas. Cruz concluded that the resistance itself had come to imitate the "deplorable aspects of the Sandinistas." Most fundamentally, Calero and Bermudez never acceded to Cruz's demand that the *contra* military be made answerable to the movement's civilian authorities. Civilian, non-partisan control of the military is a basic tenet of democratic politics, and the one that the Sandinistas themselves violated from the moment Somoza fell. Cruz's rivals' obstinacy on this question is revealing about the sort of Nicaragua one could expect them to create.

Neither the Sandinistas, whom Cruz originally supported, nor the *contras*, whom he turned to later, have the capacity to incorporate men and women like him—not only because of their imported ideologies, but also because they are still prisoners of a homegrown political mentality that equates power-sharing with surrender. To be sure, Cruz still clings to the hope that the *contras* can be salvaged

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as a democratic enterprise under different leadership, and favors continued U.S. aid. But his hope is probably vain. It is contradicted both by the FDN's incorrigible record and by the analysis he himself set forth in his letter of resignation. Kirkpatrick writes that Cruz "was never comfortable working in the framework of Nicaraguan politics," and she intends it as a criticism. The irony is that her statement is absolutely true, and that it is an encomium.

NICARAGUA, which was supposed to be the showcase for the Reagan Doctrine, has instead exposed one of the doctrine's basic flaws. Its view of the various Third World test cases is curiously abstract, as if Nicaragua, Angola, and the rest were so many spaces on a global chessboard. It merely assumed that individuals like Arturo Cruz, and their countries, would be as heroic as the theory required. Now, after five years of the *contra* crusade, the United States finds itself faced with a society and a culture that can't be made democratic as quickly as it would like, least of all by means of an armed rebellion. That doesn't mean that democracy is "impossible" in Nicaragua or elsewhere. It simply means that where pluralism does take root in Third World societies, it will usually be after slow, halting transformations in political traditions and values—transformations that the United States can encourage but rarely engineer. Democratic guerrillas probably won't play much of a role.

Isn't this surrender? What moral justification can there be for writing off the possibility of a liberated Nicaragua, even temporarily? Cruz himself suggests one. If reform in the *contra* hierarchy doesn't come, he writes, then "the tears and bloodshed will constitute too high a price" for continuing a military struggle that won't succeed anyway. Authoritarians have little right to ask others to rebel, and risk death, on their behalf. Their ambitions are scant justification for spilling others' blood, much less a reason for the moral endorsement and political support of the United States. Some policies have so little chance of reaching their objectives that it becomes morally wrong to pursue them. The administration's effort to achieve democracy in Nicaragua by means of the *contras'* insurgency is one such policy.

Like it or not, we have two choices in Central America: The United States can concede that the Sandinista revolution is an unpleasant historical fact—as President Reagan has already conceded in the case of the Iranian revolution—and proceed from there, shoring up other friendly regimes in the region and fencing in the Sandinistas through negotiated agreements enforced by our own military power. Or we can take strategic matters into our own hands, and invade. Both options are far from ideal, especially the second. But either would be more consistent with reality than the current policy, which asks others to bleed for the sake of our illusions and a *camarilla*'s ambitions—and to die for strategic interests we'd rather not die for ourselves.

CHARLES LANE

The Philippine Communists gear up.

BIG RED MACHINE

Manila

The Philippine cease-fire is over, and the New People's Army has resumed hit-and-run "tactical offensives" throughout the archipelago, with the armed forces of President Corazon Aquino in pursuit. Neither side can expect much more than a stalemate. The NPA, the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines, is skilled in guerrilla warfare, but, unsupported so far by any foreign Communist power, lacks the modern weapons to make war in strength or to occupy territory. For its part, the "new" post-Marcos Philippine military has yet to show that it can fight competently.

But this year a Communist-dominated civilian front group, the National Democratic Front, could win significant victories. For seven months, the NDF's regional organizations have been planning for the national and local elections in August. They used the 60-day cease-fire, and the months of relative calm that preceded it, to politicize thousands of *barangays* (the basic political units of the Philippines), which they control or influence to some degree. What has emerged is a national strategy of running NDF-backed candidates in the areas the front dominates, and supporting sympathetic candidates of the revived traditional parties elsewhere. The plan calls for much horse-trading and back-room bartering of votes. If it works, the Communists will gain political leverage in hundreds of localities, and put in place the building blocks of the Philippines' first left-wing electoral party.

The conventional wisdom in Manila is that Aquino's accession dealt the Communists a severe blow. However, travels in the countryside disclose no great erosion in support for local rebels, despite Aquino's massive personal popularity. Throughout 1986 Aquino's rise to power actually helped the NDF expand its local organizations. The inauguration was followed by a sharp reduction in Philippine military operations as she groped for a way to settle the insurgency peacefully. This gave local NDF contingents more freedom to organize in already infiltrated *barangays* and to expand into new ones. Also, Aquino removed all Marcos loyalists from local office and replaced them with temporary stand-ins known as Officers In Charge, or OICs. Some of these OICs, though not Communists, were sympathetic to the NDF—a sympathy now enhanced by the OICs' desire to gain NDF backing in their bids for permanent office. José M. Sison, the Communist Party founder whom Aquino recently released from jail, told me that 200 of the 1,600 temporary mayors were considered sympathetic by the NDF. Mainstream politicians say this claim is only slightly exaggerated.

The CPP has traditionally scorned elections, both as a matter of Marxist-Leninist ideology and for practical reasons. Before Marcos came to power Philippine elections

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offered little of benefit to the rural poor who today form the Communists' base of support, and Marcos's periodic elections and plebiscites were virtually meaningless. But Aquino's reign has revived the Filipino's innate enthusiasm for elections, a fact the CPP can ignore only at its peril. In 1986 it urged followers to boycott Aquino's challenge to Marcos, a blunder that alienated middle-class supporters and aroused hostility even within the Party's rural strongholds.

No party, least of all the Communists, expects dramatic victories on the national level this year. Candidates anointed by President Aquino should sweep the Senate, and elections for the lower house are likely to produce a chamber representing everyone from the far left to the far right. But in local and provincial elections, the NDF hopes to score significant gains. "Basically, we look upon elections as reactionaries' games," said one cadre, a former guerrilla squad leader who goes by the name of BicBic. "We do not expect all that much from participating. But there are many advantages for us in controlling local and provincial offices. It is better for us when the mayors and governors are on our side."

The NDF claims that it is an umbrella group of which the Communist Party is only one constituent. In fact, the Party largely dominates it. Most ranking NDF members whom I have interviewed are Party veterans. Still, though the NDF is generally obedient to the CPP Central Committee, there is some tactical disagreement over how far to go in arranging an accommodation with non-Communist liberals. For example, many NDF leaders opposed the Party's boycott of Aquino's campaign last year.

LIKE THE NPA itself, the NDF is strongest in rural areas, where the two groups work in tandem. NDF councils form the de facto government in thousands of the country's 41,000 *barangays*. It is believed that between 20 percent and 25 percent of the *barangays* are either controlled or influenced to some extent by the NDF. Philippine military surveys show that from the end of 1985 until mid-1986, the period in which Aquino seized power and formed a new government, the number of NDF-influenced *barangays* increased from about 14 percent of the total to 18 percent.

The NDF's influence is greatest in three areas: the Bicol region south of Manila; the major Visayan islands, such as Samar, Panay, Leyte, Negros, and Bohol; and northeastern Mindanao. In many parts of these regions NDF nominees could easily win municipal elections and provincial offices. In others, the front could win by pooling its base of support with that of sympathetic candidates from established parties, some of whom are already courting the Communist front. The new Philippine constitution enhances this NDF strength. Its multiparty election system favors a disciplined party that can keep its ranks in line. With traditional parties mired in internal conflicts each contest may involve four or five candidates. A mere third of the vote is enough to win.

In some towns, NDF control is so nearly absolute that an outsider's challenge is out of the question. Elsewhere, the NDF believes it can maximize the voting impact of its supporters by limiting the number of candidates in each race. But many politicians of the Liberal or PDP-Laban parties, though friendly to the NDF, are nevertheless not eager to step aside in order to make this possible. Compromises will have to be made. There are already schemes to shift such friendly rivals out of certain contests and into others to leave the field clear for the NDF. A congressional candidate, for example, was being pushed to run instead for provincial governor, leaving his district open to the congressional candidate favored by the NDF.

What are the NDF's chances? On the island of Panay, for example, the NDF hopes either to control or to influence two-thirds of the local elections next August. In the national parliamentary elections for the lower house next May, the target is at least five congressional seats. "The NDF is very strong in the countryside," J. T. Berrera, a Liberal Party leader in the island's capital, Iloilo City, told me. "They can deliver votes in more than half of the towns on Panay, and what's more they can deliver them without cost. A candidate does not have to pay them money. In Iloilo Province, outside the city, there are five new congressional districts. In four of them, I would say that no politician can win without the support of the NDF. They have effective cadres who have been there for years, hardly noticed, and they can turn out 10,000 people in local rallies if they care to. The old political parties cannot match that clout."

THE PHILIPPINE Communists' venture into ballot-box politics need not be exaggerated. There will be no landslides, though it's almost certain that NDF-backed candidates will emerge from local elections with a solid base in many provinces of the Visayas and Mindanao. Nor is it clear that the party's participation in elections constitutes a prelude to their eventual moderation along Eurocommunist lines. Indeed, most CPP members with whom I talked see the "parliamentary struggle," as it is called, as secondary to the renewed guerrilla war.

Still, one can discern a distinct new pattern of deeper Communist entrenchment in the Philippine political system, and sooner or later President Aquino will have to reckon with that. The Philippines has never had a left-wing parliamentary party supported by the rural poor. The seeds of one are now being planted, and even hardened Communists skeptical of elections find it difficult to deny the logic of nurturing them. In Panay one former NPA guerrilla fighter who now works as a political cadre talked with some amazement of the exuberance with which farmers in his foothills village welcomed the rebirth of local politics and the fun of noisy campaigns. "I had forgotten," he said, "how much Filipinos like to vote."

WILLIAM CHAPMAN

William Chapman, former Tokyo bureau chief of the *Washington Post*, is the author of *Inside the Philippine Revolution*, to be published by W. W. Norton this summer.

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Against CBS, the general lost a battle and won the war.

WESTY'S REVENGE

BY FRED BARNES

ON FEBRUARY 17, 1985, General William Westmoreland had a rendezvous with humiliation. In a deal worked out by his attorney, Daniel Burt, the former Vietnam commander agreed to abandon his $120 million libel suit against CBS as a five-month jury trial was nearing a verdict. Westmoreland had sued over the January 1982 CBS documentary "A Vietnam Deception: The Uncounted Enemy," which accused him of purposely underestimating the size of enemy forces in Vietnam to make Washington think the war was going well. But for all his effort, it seemed, Westmoreland would get practically nothing. No words of apology, no hint of retraction, not a single cent. What he got was an innocuous statement that CBS had been willing to issue all along: "CBS respects General Westmoreland's long and faithful service to his country and never intended to assert, and does not believe, that General Westmoreland was unpatriotic or disloyal in performing his duties as he saw them."

Even with some of Westmoreland's lawyers the settlement did not sit well. Three of them refused to speak with Burt, the chief counsel, after he alone negotiated the deal. Another, George Leisure, declined to appear at the press conference at which Westmoreland discussed the deal. The general's wife, Katherine, was upset. Many of his military friends and conservative political allies were apoplectic, blaming Burt for outright betrayal. The press was unsparing. The headline in the *New York Daily News* said, "Westy Raises White Flag." Connie Bruck of the *American Lawyer* wrote that "at the worst possible moment, Burt negotiated Westmoreland's unconditional surrender." The case had a pathetic denouement. At the press conference, Westmoreland claimed he had gotten everything he wanted. It was, he declared, a "victory." Reporters scoffed.

Westmoreland did win. True, he lost the battle over the lawsuit. As a legal matter, his case was weak, all the more so because the law correctly favors the press over public figures who sue for libel. But Westmoreland won the larger war. Since the Vietnam documentary appeared five years ago, CBS has been in sharp decline. And virtually all of its troubles, directly or indirectly, are attributable to fallout from "A Vietnam Deception." CBS was headed for a bad patch in any event, facing intensified competition from cable TV, a dip in ratings, and flat ad revenues. But the feud with Westmoreland kept the dark side of CBS—dubious editing and production practices, alleged liberal bias, quarreling journalists and executives—in the public eye. Five years of bad publicity steepened the decline.

The Westy brouhaha also ripened CBS as a takeover target. All three commercial networks were seen as having takeover potential. NBC and ABC were taken over. But remember who first sought to gain control of CBS, putting its stock into play and starting a chain of events that culminated in an internal takeover and new management: conservatives led by Senator Jesse Helms and angered by the Westmoreland show.

That's the big picture. What about Westmoreland's narrower goals? Obviously he wanted personal vindication. Despite losing the lawsuit, he's gotten a measure of that. Though his lawyer, Burt, and some of his right-wing backers were treated roughly by the press, Westmoreland was usually portrayed as an honorable and sympathetic fellow, albeit misguided and rigid. This was a dramatic improvement in his image. Following the Vietnam War, he was discredited and ignored. Now he is popular and sought after, invited to parades, seminars, conventions, etc. Westmoreland has experienced a delicious irony: the show that attacked him revived him.

Westmoreland was also eager to disprove the show's thesis—that he and his underlings conspired to falsify intelligence information dispatched to Washington. He didn't achieve that goal. The thesis is probably not provable or disprovable, since there are credible witnesses on each side. Still, the documentary was badly tarnished, first in the toughest exposé of news practices ever published by *TV Guide*, then in a CBS study by senior executive producer Burton Benjamin, and finally in testimony during the trial. The *TV Guide* article was called "Anatomy of a Smear: How CBS Broke the Rules and 'Got' Gen. Westmoreland." It accused CBS of "massive distortions," particularly by keeping off the broadcast officials who disputed the thesis, and of violations of its own rules (coaching witnesses, misediting interviews) and journalistic ethics.

The *TV Guide* story, with its leaked transcripts and information from inside CBS, was a pivotal event. Without it there wouldn't have been a Westmoreland lawsuit. When it broke in May 1982, Van Gordon Sauter, then the chief of the news division, was attending a CBS affiliates' convention in San Francisco. He immediately ordered the investigation by Benjamin. In his 59-page report on the show, Benjamin cited 11 "principal flaws," mostly the same as those found by *TV Guide.* The report was released in April 1983 by order of the judge in the Westmoreland libel case. This put CBS itself among the public critics of the show. All the points made by *TV Guide* and Benjamin were repeated at the trial, which led to another bonus for West-

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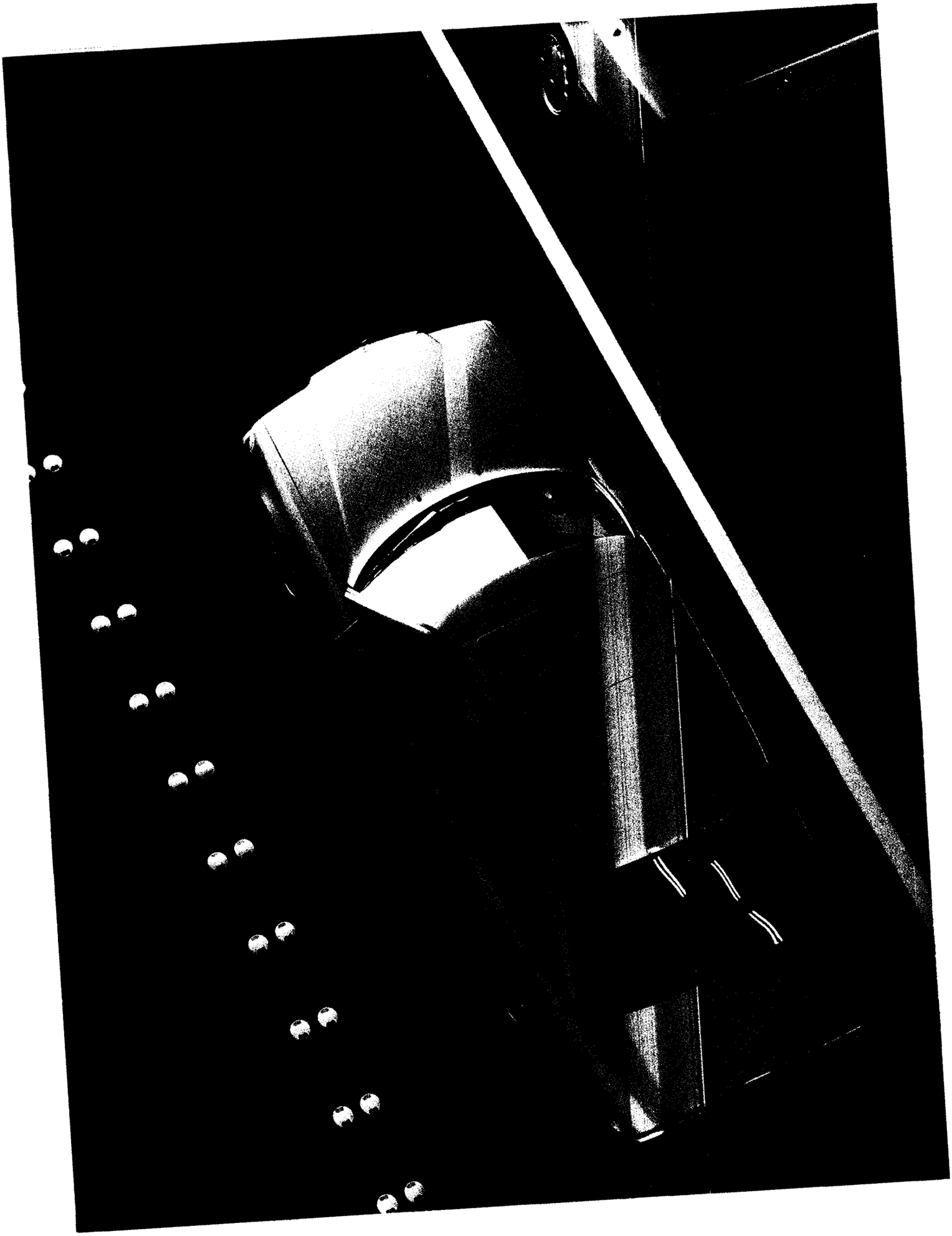

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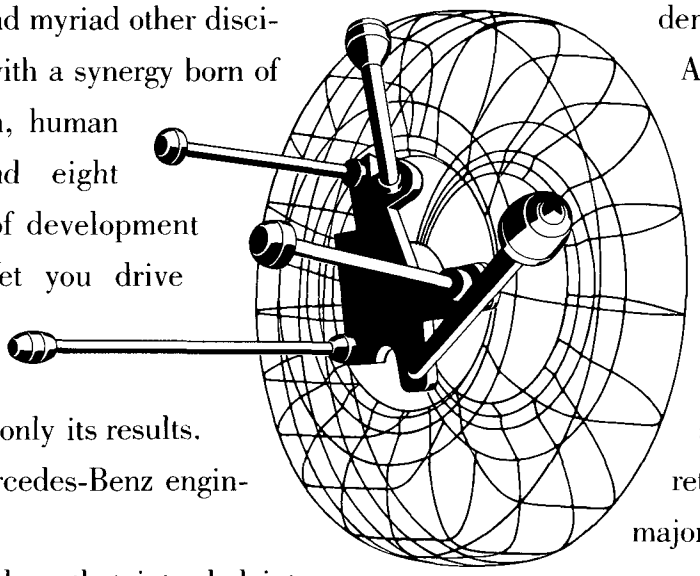

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moreland last year. This was a peculiar but lavishly praised book, *Reckless Disregard*, by novelist Renata Adler, who had attended some of the trial and perused all the transcripts. She savaged CBS anew and dismissed the thesis of the documentary as "preposterous."

In the military, commanders are held accountable for trouble that occurs on their watch. And Westmoreland was partially successful in imposing this rule on CBS. The producer of the show, George Crile, was suspended at one point, then transferred to "60 Minutes." CBS Chairman Thomas Wyman and Sauter, the news chief, were ousted as an indirect result of the show, which set in motion a sequence of events that led to a change in CBS management.

A year before the trial, Burt, the Westmoreland lawyer, predicted, "We are about to see the dismantling of a major news network." This was bravado. Still, the news division lost moral standing in the Westmoreland affair and thus became less able to resist cutbacks, such as the layoff of 215 employees, including 14 of the 90 CBS correspondents, in a sweeping retrenchment ordered a few weeks ago. Under new CEO Laurence Tisch, CBS Inc. is undergoing a major restructuring, including the sell-off of various divisions.

One of the chief financiers of the Westmoreland lawsuit, Richard Larry, had a specific aim: provoking a national debate over libel law. Larry is president of the conservative Sarah Scaife Foundation, which pumped $3 million into the case. To his delight, the trial begat the Adler book, which advocates an easier legal standard for public figures who try to prove they've been libeled. As a result, he said, "Libel law as it affects public figures is now being doubted and looked at by law schools, by law reviews, by legal experts."

GEORGE VRADENBERG, the CBS counsel who negotiated the settlement of the lawsuit, describes the Westmoreland affair as "a comet with a long tail." Too true. A former CBS official says the documentary would have been quickly forgotten if it hadn't been quite so pointed in its criticism of Westmoreland. "If the show hadn't used the word 'conspiracy' and promoted it, this chain of things might not have happened," the ex-official says.

The chain began in September 1984 as Senator Helms was running for re-election in North Carolina. His campaign advisers discovered from their polls that Helms was badly hurt by tough newspaper and TV coverage of the campaign. "If we come out of this and Helms wins, we ought to do something about the media," Thomas Ellis, Helms's chief political adviser, told campaign strategists Carter Wrenn and James Cain. What he had in mind was a fresh assault on the "liberal" media, and Wrenn and Cain were eager.

Following the election, they agreed that the best course was to seek control of a major media outlet. Wrenn wanted to go after the *Washington Post*, but feared that many conservatives wouldn't mobilize against a newspaper. Instead, the Helms boys turned to CBS, a liberal bogeyman. *TV Guide* had concluded that CBS was the network most critical of President Reagan, and meanwhile the Westmoreland trial was under way in New York. "The Westmoreland thing was a focal point where a lot of things came together—discontent with coverage of Vietnam, discontent with CBS's bias, and so on," said Wrenn. "The trial focused attention. It put some meat on the skeleton. It got into the detail of CBS's bias. . . . It had the impact of a national campaign. It did more to educate people on media bias than you could with $10 to $20 million in ads." Besides, added Cain, the schedule of the trial in late 1984 and early 1985 was expected to "dovetail with ours. The trial would come up with evidence of CBS's shoddiness at the time we were trying to get people to buy stock." Told of the plan, Helms said, "Now you've come up with something that appeals to me."

In January 1985 a Helms front group, Fairness in Media, sent millions of letters urging conservatives to buy CBS stock. Few did. Nevertheless, CBS officials took Helms seriously, sending a team of lawyers to Raleigh to investigate the senator's political operation and filing a suit against FIM. They had a reason. "The biggest risk to CBS is not that Fairness in Media . . . will be able to buy enough stock to control CBS, according to Wall Street analysts and investment bankers," wrote David Vise of the *Washington Post*. "Instead the greatest risk is that some Wall Street takeover specialist will make a bid for the company amidst the turmoil." The Helms bid "raises the profile of the company [CBS]," financial analyst Mark Riely told Vise. "To the extent that it makes CBS appear more vulnerable, it may create interest among other sharks."

The sharks began to circle, including Ivan Boesky, who had donated $2,000 to Helms's Senate re-election. Yet the most serious bid came not from a New York takeover specialist but from Atlanta broadcasting tycoon Ted Turner. He had long coveted a network of his own, and the Helms venture piqued his interest. He and Helms had been acquaintances for several years. In 1982 he donated two-and-a-half hours on his WTBS Superstation to Helms for a documentary entitled "KGB: The Lie . . . and The Truth." In March 1985 Wrenn arranged a meeting with Turner. He wanted Turner's financial backing, but by then Turner was bent on making his own bid for CBS. "He was trying to find out what we were doing," said Wrenn. "Did we have people with a lot of money? He was looking for backers. He said he'd been interested in a change in direction of the networks for some time. Our concern was ideological. It's hard to define what his was."

Turner had further talks with Helms. And he wasn't above demagoguery on the Westmoreland issue. He told the Senate Commerce Committee in July 1985 that he might have "let sleeping dogs lie" on the matter of Vietnam intelligence. But vindicating Westmoreland was hardly his motivation. Unable to get conservative backers, he went off on his own, announcing a $5.4 billion takeover offer in April 1985. Turner had a better chance than FIM of acquiring CBS, but the odds were long. His offer was based on stock and debt securities—junk bonds—and no cash. CBS again overreacted. In July CBS Chairman Wyman decided to buy up CBS stock to forestall the possibility of a takeover. The company acquired 21 percent of the 29 million shares and built up a heavy debt burden of about $1 billion in doing so. Turner was stymied; CBS was in financial difficulty.

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Meanwhile, Wyman had come to know the chairman of the Loews Corporation, Laurence Tisch. The Helms effort followed by the Turner bid brought the two together. After a tennis game in January 1985, Tisch told his friend James Wolfensohn, an investment banker and member of the CBS board of directors, of his alarm that Helms would attempt to make CBS his ideological mouthpiece. "Any extremist makes me feel uncomfortable," he later told journalist Ken Auletta. Tisch is a centrist who donates to Republican and Democratic campaigns. He especially likes Senator Sam Nunn of Georgia, a moderate Democrat. Tisch told Wolfensohn he'd be glad to help if it was needed. A few months later, when CBS faced the Turner bid, Tisch spoke again to Wolfensohn and said, "If you're looking for a white knight, consider us [Loews] a potential." In May 1985 a meeting was arranged between Tisch and Wyman. Afterward Tisch, his sons, and brother decided Loews should buy CBS stock. In July Tisch called Wyman and told him that Loews had purchased five percent of CBS's stock. The CBS board was apprehensive about Tisch's intentions, but in October 1985 Wyman invited Tisch to join the board. Tisch signed on.

Last September the man brought on board to block a takeover staged one himself, with help from CBS founder William Paley. Wyman was canned, Tisch was installed as chief executive officer. By that time, Tisch held 24.9 percent of the stock, making him the most powerful board member. He is an aggressive cost-cutter, a man who likes streamlined operations. CBS quickly felt his knife, as limousine service was eliminated, dining rooms were shut, and a special store was closed. He cut out a layer or more of corporate bureaucracy. He managed to sell off some CBS operations such as publishing, but the board blocked his attempt to get rid of the CBS Records division.

TISCH VOWED repeatedly not to tinker with news coverage, and he hasn't. "Nothing is being done in this company that touches programming, news or broadcasting, media," he told *Broadcasting* magazine last October. "There's nothing to do with anything that counts." But he has tinkered with the news division, whose budget soared from $89 million in 1978 to $300 million this year. In March CBS News was slapped with a ten percent budget reduction that included the firing of well-known correspondents Ike Pappas and Fred Graham. The move had an extraordinarily unsettling effect, prompting anchorman Dan Rather to complain on the op-ed page of the *New York Times*. Tisch, he wrote, said "he wanted us to be the best. We want nothing more than to fulfill that mandate. Ironically, he has now made the task seem something between difficult and impossible." Even more ironic is the fact that the man brought to CBS to save the network and Rather from Helms and Turner is now Rather's nemesis.

"In the television era, long after [Edward R. Murrow], CBS News remained a place apart—proud, even arrogant, the standard," Peter Boyer of the *New York Times* wrote recently. For decades the "CBS Evening News" ran first in the ratings. The network's documentaries were tough and uncompromising. In 1971 news chief Frank Stanton risked contempt of Congress rather than turn over outtakes from the CBS Reports special "The Selling of the Pentagon." And CBS brooked no criticism.

In 1972 a writer for *TV Guide* named Edith Efron wrote a book called *The News Twisters*, an attack on the network news shows for favoring the "Democratic-liberal-left axis." NBC and ABC took the criticism in stride, but CBS launched a full-scale public relations drive to discredit the book. The CBS campaign was so aggressive that Efron wrote a sequel, *How CBS Tried to Kill A Book*, in which she accused the network of trumpeting phony scholarship and "systematic funneling of erroneous information into the media" about her political slant. (Today Efron is far less critical of the networks, particularly CBS. The news shows are more balanced now, she says, and CBS behaved like a corporation protecting itself, not an ideological bully, in assaulting her book.)

In 1984 Don Kowet wrote a book about the Westmoreland show called *A Matter of Honor.* He was the co-author, with Sally Bedell Smith, of the *TV Guide* exposé of the documentary. CBS first mounted a challenge to Kowet with his publisher, Macmillan. This caused Macmillan to charge that CBS was making "an unprecedented and shocking attempt to chill" publication of the book. Just before the book came out, CBS sent letters to 50 reviewers labeling it "reckless and malicious." And it arranged for George Crile, the producer of the documentary, to appear on radio and TV talk shows that had booked Kowet.

Since Westmoreland's lawyer was waging his own pretrial public relations campaign, the attack on Kowet was understandable. But last year, with the trial over, CBS went after Adler as aggressively as it had Kowet. It disputed her analysis of the documentary and trial in a 49-page critique sent to the *New Yorker*, where her analysis had first appeared; to Alfred A. Knopf, which was about to publish it as a book; and to journalists. Some journalists also received legal documents from a landlord-tenant fight involving Adler and the widow of a partner in the law firm defending CBS, the suggestion being that Adler was pursuing a petty vendetta. Robert Gottlieb, then Knopf president, accused CBS of "harassment" and of trying "to make publication of the book difficult." Indeed, publication was delayed from September to November to check out what CBS called Adler's "misrepresentations and distortions." She added a coda to the book, noting that the CBS effort "did not lead to (or require) a single change in the manuscript."

This time CBS gave up meekly. On October 27 William Safire wrote in the *New York Times* that Tisch should "publicly disassociate his company" from all efforts "to block publication of [Adler's] book." Safire said that John Scanlon, a publicist hired by CBS, was trying to suppress the book and harass Adler. Soon the campaign against Adler stopped. Scanlon concedes the attack backfired. His contract with CBS, along with those of all consultants, was severed, though Scanlon has since advised Tisch on a fee basis. At CBS the arrogance, the swagger, was gone. Call it Westmoreland's revenge. □

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

From Two Americas

Man Facing Southeast
(FilmDallas)

Hoosiers
(Orion)

An extraordinary debut. In fact it's the director's second film, but (I think) the first to come this way. Eliseo Subiela, a 43-year-old Argentine, wrote and directed *Man Facing Southeast* with the courage of his conviction about it. Another film about a visitor from outer space? Another film about a psychiatrist and a patient so close that they become allied against the medical establishment? Yes, said Subiela.

The venture rests not only on his conviction about the material but also on his surety that he could get the element of quiet into the film—the feeling of hush in the midst of bustle. The principal setting is a mental hospital in Buenos Aires, a setting fixed for us under the credits with shots of empty corridors, with remote sounds and the tolling of a bell that fades abruptly on its last note. By the time the action begins, an atmosphere has been evoked of loneliness and echo, of sequestration, of small enclosure within large space.

Subiela tells his story with the same suggestions of invisible imprisonments. His manner of looking at scenes with angles of tacit discovery, the rhythms that carry his characters along as on a slow current—these combine to create the sense, fanciful yet inescapable, that the camera itself is gradually becoming persuaded about the strange matters before it.

That story begins—as the psychiatrist himself agrees—in a fairly routine way. A check of the hospital roster discloses an extra patient. This is reported to a staff doctor, played by Lorenzo Quinteros (who—coincidentally—resembles Michelangelo Antonioni). He finds the extra man playing the organ beautifully in the hospital chapel. This patient, acted with poise and depth by Hugo Soto, tells the doctor that he has come from outer space, that he and others from his home have taken human shape in order to study the inhuman behavior of human beings. Quinteros tags the man with one of the categories of mental illness and is not swerved by the fact that Soto stands silently for hours at a time in the hospital courtyard, always facing southeast, in order (he says) to receive messages from his home out in space. But more and more evidence makes Quinteros doubt his first view: Soto's skills in the pathology lab where he has asked to assist, his messianic effect on fellow patients, the testimony of a young woman who has known Soto outside, and the doctor's growing affection for this serene patient. Beyond all this, Soto's sorrowful comments on human life, like those of a compassionate tourist, make the doctor examine his own condition: his misery in his empty apartment as he runs home movies of his children who live with his estranged wife, as he drinks and toots his saxophone.

After the point at which the doctor begins to doubt his diagnosis, we begin to worry about the ending. How can this situation be resolved? Subiela handles it aptly by not really resolving it. If he had done even less to resolve it—had omitted such supernatural touches as an exhibition of psychokinesis—the film would have ended more clearly unclear: ambiguous, unsettling. Was the patient from outer space or an idiot savant? A clever psychopath, or are there, in the Arthur C. Clarke vein, superior intelligences in space worrying about us?

But whatever the script's shortcomings, Subiela's direction gives the film the breadth of a musical largo.

Once in a while we get what I call a time-capsule picture. Such is *Hoosiers*. If it were sealed in a tube, buried, and dug up in the unforeseeable future, it would provide those future folk with two perfect specimens of our times: an absolutely typical sport picture and an epitome of one segment of our culture.

The sport is basketball, high school variety—more, Indiana small-town variety. Gene Hackman comes to town as the new basketball coach, engaged because the principal is an old chum who hires him despite the fact that ten years ago, after ten years' coaching, Hackman was fired someplace else for volatile misbehavior. He has spent the interim in the Navy, and he arrives here knowing that this will be his last chance to make it as a coach. Then follow all the predictable steps, adjusted to the locus: the hostility of the town, the recalcitrance of the players, the coolness of another teacher (Barbara Hershey) that eventually becomes love, the gradual rehabilitation of both coach and team until they make their way through the quarter- and semifinals to win the state championship in Indianapolis. (Sorry to kill the surprise.) The score by Jerry Goldsmith comes as close to that of *Chariots of Fire* as it dares, and there's even a fringe character, as in *Chariots*, who knows the game well, helps the team, and cheers its victory from afar.

The test of this genre is simple: Knowing exactly what we're watching, are we nevertheless swept up? *Hoosiers* passes the test easily: we get taut, tearful, gleeful. Angelo Pizzo, the writer; David Anspaugh, the director; and C. Timothy

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Outrageous Fortune. Two women—Shelley Long, delicately goofy, and Bette Midler, wonderfully vulgar—involved in an enjoyably unbelievable spy chase. (Reviewed 3/2/87)

Swimming to Cambodia. Spalding Gray's one-man show, filmed tactfully by Jonathan Demme, about Gray's small role in *The Killing Fields*. Engaging, wry, residually moving in its sidewise glances at Vietnam. (3/23/87)

Tin Men. Baltimore, 1963, salesmen of aluminum siding. Barry Levinson's plot is sitcom, but around it the talk of the salesmen is zippy, pungent, live. (3/30/87)

Working Girls. A Park Avenue brothel. The film's seemingly flat verism ultimately becomes strong protest. (3/16/87)

SK

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O'Meara, the editor, are good at their jobs. Hackman is, as usual, a reliable supplier of sturdy material; Hershey is adequate; and Dennis Hopper doesn't overdo his bid for an Oscar as the lovable drunken father of one of the team. Those people in the future who dig up *Hoosiers* will get a good idea of the way a sport was used, in film conventions as formal as the ballet, to register the excitement of that particular sport in a structure entwined with life around it.

And here that last element is more important than usual. *Hoosiers* preserves a slice of middle America. The script gives us moments, like the all-male meeting in the barber shop, that tell us a lot about the town. Anspaugh has put together a mosaic of faces in supporting roles and in no roles at all, just people living there, that persuades us: these people live where they say they live, and they like it. And Fred Murphy, the cinematographer, has done justice to the broad, bosomy landscape. A community is established by the film, and we see why high school basketball means so much to the town, old and young. It *grows* there, like their crops; cheering the team becomes the best available means to express their feelings for the place where they live. When a clergyman comes into the locker room before a game to conduct a short prayer with the team, it doesn't seem the least out of the ordinary.

Those future people will also note that, despite what they may know about professional basketball, this team doesn't encounter any black players until it gets to the big city.

Two poets, three revolutions, and despair.

THE SILENCE IN ARAB CULTURE

BY FOUAD AJAMI

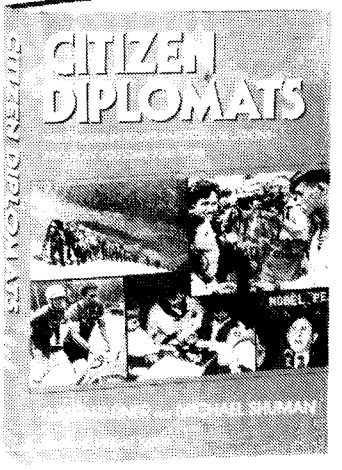
NIZAR QABBANI and Adonis are two of the most distinguished poets in the Arab world. For more than a quarter of a century, both men, both born in Syria, both living in Beirut, have been among the most fecund writers of their generation. Qabbani, the "lighter" and more popular, has been the great romantic poet; his free verse broke with the elaborate strictures of classical Arabic poetry and made Arabic verse more accessible and less forbidding. Adonis has done this, too, and significant work in prose as well; he has been a great literary critic, an essayist brilliantly venturing into the history of Arab thought and ideas, into the relationship between Arab politics and the language of Arab literature. Both men have been able to express what was on the minds of many, to plumb psychological and emotional depths that most Arab intellectuals and writers have preferred to evade.

Recently both have called attention to a new problem for their art: that the Arabic word is ailing, that it has become less and less possible to write about matters Arab. Qabbani and Adonis insist that something in Arab reality is eluding writing, that there is a disquieting lack of fit between the words people speak and the world they confront each day. Qabbani explains some of the bewilderment—and, at times, stunned silence—with which modern-day Arabs have been looking at their own society and its breakdown. "I can't write," Qabbani told a Kuwaiti daily in 1985:

> I don't write because I can't say something that equals the sorrow of this Arab nation. I can't open any of the countless dungeons in this large prison. The poet is made of flesh and blood: you can't make him speak when he loses his appetite for words; you can't ask him to entertain and enthrall when there is nothing in the Arab world that entertains or enthralls. When we were secondary school children our history teacher used to call the Ottoman Empire "the sick man." What is the history teacher to call these mini-empires of the Arab world being devoured by disease? What are we to call these mini-empires with broken doors and shattered windows and blown-away roofs? What can the writer say and write in this large Arab hospital?

Fouad Ajami is professor of Middle Eastern studies at the School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, and the author of *The Vanished Imam: Musa al Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon* (Cornell University Press).

"I couldn't put it down . . ."*



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Qabbani borrows the term *jahiliyya*, or pre-Islamic ignorance, to describe the Arab reality of today. At least that sordid time, he says, had a function for the poet: the poet was his tribe's "lawyer," its chronicler and its scribe. The new *jahiliyya* is darker than the old. It has annulled the role of the poet, because it wants people on their knees, it wants them to crawl. The "sultans of today" want only supporters and sycophants, and this has had the effect of emasculating the language. They fear the word, because the word is "intrinsically an instrument of opposition": the enmity between the word and *al sulta*, authority, is classical and inevitable.

QABBANI, WHO LOST his wife in one of Beirut's daily episodes of violence (a bombing of the Iraqi Embassy in 1981), was asked about the fate of the city that had nurtured him and been home for him. Beirut, he said, is a "ball of fire" that has "burned my hands. But I still hold onto it," just like the child who puts in the palm of his hand "poisonous insects, who holds onto a scorpion without being afraid of being stung." The Beirut of the 1950s and '60s—the enchanted city of his youth, the city of poetry and pleasures—is a "thing of the past." You can't bring it back to life, as you can't bring back the old glories of Rome and Athens:

> History is a river that never flows backward. . . . We must have the courage to admit that the war in Lebanon has overturned the old Lebanon. Some of us may dream of young Beirut, of the playful city that enthralled millions of men, but we must be realistic and consider the city before us. Nothing remains of old Beirut except the scent of it that blows from old notebooks . . . .

Qabbani's lament—that words have been rendered futile by the course of history—was foreshadowed in "Balqees," a long poem named for his wife, written in grief after her murder (the translation is by Lisa Buttenheim):

> Balqees, don't be absent from me,
> After you, the sun doesn't shine on the shore.
> I will say in my inquiry that the thief has come to wear a fighter's clothes,
> I will say in my inquiry that the gifted leader is now an agent,
> I will say that the tale of enlightenment is the most ludicrous joke ever told,
> And that we are a tribe among tribes.
> *This* is history . . . oh Balqees.
> How do people distinguish between gardens and dunghills?
> Balqees . . . oh princess,
> You burn, caught between tribal wars,
> What will I write about the departure of my queen?
> Indeed, words are my scandal . . .
> Here we look through piles of victims
> For a star that fell, for a body strewn like fragments of a mirror.
> Here we ask, oh my love:
> Was this *your* grave
> Or the grave of Arab nationalism?
>
> I won't read history after today,
> My fingers are burned, my clothes bedecked with blood,
> Here we are entering the stone age . . .
> Each day we regress a thousand years.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> What does poetry say in this era, Balqees?
> What does poetry say in the cowardly era . . . ?
> The Arab world is crushed, repressed, its tongue cut . . .
> We are crime personified . . .
>
> Balqees . . .
> I beg your forgiveness.
> Perhaps your life was the ransom of my own,
> Indeed I know well
> That the purpose of those who were entangled in murder was to kill my words!
> Rest in God's care, oh beautiful one,
> Poetry, after you, is impossible . . .

ADONIS'S ACCOUNT of his predicament, given in a provocative book of literary criticism, *Al Shi'riyya Al-Arabiyya* (Arabic Poetics), which was published in Beirut in 1985, goes beyond the grief of Qabbani. Here we have a sustained analysis of what Adonis calls the "dual siege" of the Arab writer, who is caught between Western thought on the one hand and the hold of Islamic tradition on the other. Adonis's is not the common concern that has bedeviled Arab thought since its encounter with the West, the frequently false anxiety about reconciling "tradition" and "modernity." We are way past that here: what we have, rather, is an obituary to *asr al Nahada*, the Age of the Renaissance, or what Albert Hourani called the Liberal Age in Arab history.

Adonis's argument is that the marriage between the West, or the kind of modernity that the Arabs imported from the West, and *turath* (tradition), or the dominant political and cultural order to which men and women in the Arab world must adhere, has produced a monstrous and arid world. A "vast desert of imports and consumption" has created a false image of modernity—really "a large swindle," a world in trappings that have nothing to do with either the Arab world as it really is or with the West. "Our contemporary modernity is a mirage." The intellectuals and the writers who succumb to the temptations of this false modernity are doomed from the start. Trying to emulate the style and the forms of an alien civilization, they produce dead works, replicas of one culture in another. As long as the Arabs fail to understand that there is more to the West than what they have so far found in it—there is its spirit of curiosity, its appetite for knowledge, its courage before dogma—the "Western" modernity of the Arab world will be a "hired" form of modernity, brought to Arab lands through "trick" or "theft."

But then there is that other false option that paralyzes Arab thought, that offers to rescue it from the assault of the foreigner: the unquestioned adherence to the world of the ancestors. Indeed, the authority of the ancestor increases as the cultural seduction of foreign models grows more intense and their intrusion becomes more relentless. Surely, says Adonis, "authenticity" and "fidelity" do not require a slavish imitation of the ways of the elders, or a willful insistence in the face of reality that inherited ways hold all the answers: "Authenticity is not a specific point in the past; identity does not require a return to a particular position in our history." Fidelity is more a matter of creativity, of retaining and applying the spirit that moved Arabic and Islamic civilization in its more creative eras. It is making sure that the "new" emerges out of the past, that there are no "false discontinuities," no contrived breakthroughs.

ADONIS ADMONISHES his readers that the opposition of "Muslim-Arab society" to the "European-American West" is not a "human or philosophical or poetic opposition." It is merely a "political" opposition:

> Our opposition to the West should not mean its total and generic rejection. It should entail our rejection only of its colonial-ideological formation. Thus when we reject its machines and technology, this should not mean that we reject the intellectual process that produced these machines. It should mean only that we oppose the way this technology is dumped on us, the way it turns us into mere consumers, the way it turns our country into a large flea-market.

Care must be exercised, Adonis argues, lest this false dichotomy between

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an "Islamic-Arab East" and an "advanced European-American West" become a warrant for Arab backwardness and Islamic retrogression. Strictly speaking, he says, there is no East or West. Each of these worlds has many worlds within it. In the West there are forms of life that are more backward than anything in the East. Moreover, there are "small worlds of creativity and progress" within the East. Like it or not, something of a "world civilization" encompasses us all. Modernity is no longer the property of a given place or a given people; and it is no longer possible to avoid.

Real modernity is born, says Adonis, when the "dual dependence" upon the contrived world of the foreigner and the contrived world of the ancestor is transcended. Modernity—real and living—will have a chance when the repressed yearnings of this large and silent Arab civilization are released, when people write new things, when they dare to be bold in the face of prohibitions. Then the Arabic language, free from the hold of the past and from attempts to imitate European and American models, might give expression to something vital and decent. Until now, Arab thought has been timid; insecure and on the run, it has been marred by a kind of "awe of magic"—either the magic of the foreigner or the magic of the past. Authority, *al sulta*, has always paid homage to the magic of the ancestor and persecuted those who questioned it, even as it was itself falling under the sway of foreign powers.

"SOMETHING IN the Arab world has died," Adonis told me in New York last year. He was struggling with a hard decision: to give up on Beirut and settle in France. He had endured Beirut's carnage and breakdown for more than a decade. This was the city that had sustained him as a poet and an essayist, the city in which he had edited two path-breaking literary journals, *Shi'r* and *Mawaqif*. He was reluctant to leave, to let go of the material of his art. He knew the sad fate of exiled writers, their alienation from new surroundings, their nostalgia for an old country that grows more distant and more abstract. And he was worried about his distance from the Arabic language.

But there was in this uniquely gifted and sturdy man a deep sorrow and a deep resignation. Like Qabbani, he spoke of the death of Arab civilization. There comes a time, he said, when a peo-

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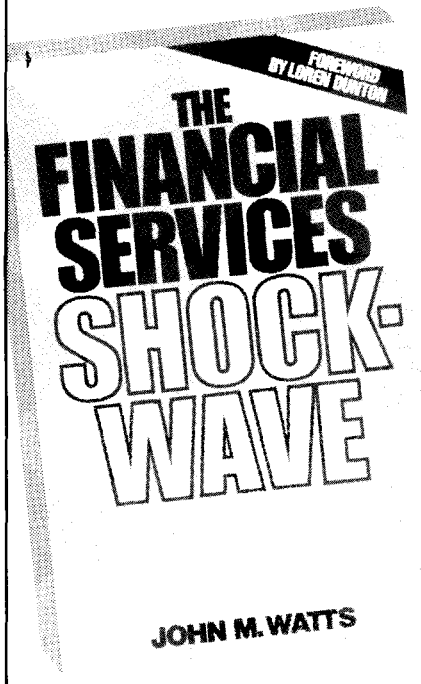

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ple can no longer give. In Beirut's wars he had seen all the grand ideas and all the ideologies issue in slaughter, and in the return of the Lebanese and the other Arabs in Lebanon to a primitive tribalism. Adonis no longer recognized his city. And for a poet, there was in him a marked reluctance to name things, to describe what he had seen. Had he intuited that it would end like this? In "Elegy for the time at hand," one of his best and most haunting poems, written in the late 1960s, Adonis had written of tyranny, silence, and exile:

> When pharaohs ruled and men were cannibals,
> the words of poets died.
> While pharaohs rule,
> I take my books and go,
> living in the shade of my heart,
> weaving from my verse's silk
> a new heaven.
> Give me the exile's soul,
> the pilgrim's face.
> I turn my back on jails . . .
> I leave the dead to death.

But reality outpaced even the poet's bleak vision.

IS IT ANY WONDER, really, that many of those in the Arab world who traffic with words feel that they have so little to say? From its very beginning in the late 1800s, Arab nationalism was a project of the intellectuals, an idea flung in the face of a political order that was always torn by all sorts of conflicts. Thus, when the written and the spoken word weary of themselves, when the usual phrases become helpless before stark reality, it is hard even for the most devoted to persist. Over the last few decades Arab society has run through most of its myths. And what remains in the wake of the word, of the many proud things people have said of themselves and their history, is a new world of cruelty, waste, and confusion.

Whatever its shortcomings, the old world (which ruptured after 1967 and was broken with a fury after 1973) was whole. It was never a brilliant world, but it had its ways and its rhythms. At least people knew who they were, and had some solid ground to stand on. The winners may have been a little uppity, or cruel, but they could not fly too high: there were things that people were ashamed to do, limits that marked out the moral boundaries of their action. The permissible (*hallal*) was distinguishable from the impermissible (*haram*). Scoundrels and bullies knew what they could get away with, and what they could not. There was, in sum, a moral order. But all this has been blown away. The continuity of a culture has been shattered. All the attempts to reconstitute the wholeness, to ignore the great rupture by means of cultural chauvinism or a hyperauthentic traditionalism, have brought only pain.

THE WORLD of the elders, the world that generations of Arab nationalists fashioned, has been overwhelmed by a ferocious rebellion. We have given this storm an Islamic label. We have dubbed it "Islamic fundamentalism." In Lebanon, and in the Gulf, we have been hearing the claims and the noises of a radical Shiism. But while Islam is indeed the banner that has been unfurled, we have been spending too much time speaking of Islam. We have not spoken enough of the sentiments and the furies that have given Islam its modern (and its illusory) relevance, of the mixture of pain and the justifiable yearning for revenge that has given revolts launched from the depths of society their power.

A grim fight has broken out between the heights of Arab society and its depths. The fight has destroyed many lives—and many political constructs. Politically, the principal casualty has been Arab nationalism. It was a fragile edifice. It looked past things it did not wish to see. It was contemptuous of the hinterland, and virtually silent about popular culture. It never really had a theory of practical action. It had inherited the remains of the Ottoman Empire that collapsed during World War I. An easy leap was made from Ottomanism to Arabism; the new idea relied on roughly the same social base as the old, on the universe of urban elites and merchants and army officers. Some of Pan-Arabism's most passionate advocates were Christian Arabs, who were searching for a place in a largely Muslim world. But its principal social glue was the political and cultural ascendancy of urban, orthodox (Sunni) Islam. And for the last four decades, its most frequently proclaimed cause—pursued now with cynicism, now with conviction—was the cause of Palestine.

The political capitals of this idea were Beirut, Damascus, and Baghdad. Cairo was a latecomer to Arabism. Qaddafi's Tripoli followed suit, but it remained a place of little consequence in the Pan-Arab scheme of things. Cairo under Nasser gave the Pan-Arab movement its moment of power—but Cairo under Sadat was the first to exit, leaving the Levant and the Gulf to their own feuds and disorders. The great Egyptian revolt against the West, and the great venture into the Arab-Israeli war, had ended in futility and defeat—and then in dependence on America. Pride can be a heavy burden; under Sadat and under Mubarak, Egypt put pride aside for the purpose of coming to terms with the world.

THREE ATTEMPTS have been made to reconstitute Arab political life in the aftermath of the defeat of 1967, and of the defection of the Egyptian state from Arab politics. The first was the Palestinian movement, which enjoyed a brief moment of ascendancy after 1967. The second was the recovery of the dominant political order in the war of 1973 and in the petro-era, which gave power to the conservative oil states in the affairs of the Arab world. The third was the revolt of Shiism. The last has greater intensity and greater depth than its predecessors; but its predecessors also had their moments of delusion: those, too, were times of a belief in the quick fix, in the promise that there was a bright new world in the making.

When it rode high in the aftermath of 1967, the Palestinian movement insisted that it had the answers not only to the problems of the Palestinians, but also to broader Arab ailments. It was the Palestinian belief that "guerrilla warfare" or "wars of national liberation" or "revolution" would deliver Arab society from its superstitions and weaknesses. The Palestinian movement would create a new, emancipated society. The pamphleteers went to work, and the gunmen, too, proclaiming an era of daring and defiance. But it was all delirium.

It turned out that the order of Arab states had found room for the Palestinians only because of its own weakness in the aftermath of 1967. When the order of Arab states bounced back, the Jordanian army shattered the Palestinian sanctuary and its illusions. Roughly the same story played itself out in Lebanon—though there, slightly more than a decade after the debacle of Jordan, the Arab world left the task of dealing with the Palestinians to Ariel Sharon. By then the Palestinian movement had been stripped of any sense of mission—save keeping what it had in Beirut. In Beirut there were perquisites to be had: checkpoints that humbled the Lebanese who had to cross them; contraband trade; the spectacle of press conferences and offi-

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cials and cadres; and, more generally, the semblance of a politics. A Levantine movement in a Levantine city.

The petro-era was a more cautious time. Its assumptions were simple: the Arab would be a consumer, the Arab world would be deradicalized, there would be a solution to the Palestinian dilemma. By one reckoning, this was to be a time of restoration—a triumph of the old order, a shift in the balance of power from the radical cities of Cairo and Damascus to the conservative states of the Gulf. But restoration required discipline, and this was nowhere to be found in the windfall society of the oil era. Finally, in 1979-80, the Iranian revolution served notice on that period of plunder and confusion. It was ironic but apt that the era of Arab concupiscence spawned a season of Islamic wrath. The petro-era experimented with an impossible combination: it paid homage to the *turath*, or the tradition, while throwing the doors of the Arab political-cultural order wide open to the Americans. It tried to have it both ways, and it failed.

IN THE THIRD movement of restoration, the current one, restraint has been cast to the wind. Khomeini's revolution marks the revenge of the *turath*. The *Mahdi*, the messiah, appears in full force. There is no secular cover, no Western discourse. That the new rebellion originated not in the Arab world, not in Beirut, Baghdad, Damascus, or Cairo, but in Iran says a great deal about the sectarian paralysis of Arab politics. The *Mahdi* found it easy to make himself a party to the politics of the Arab world. The power of Khomeini's millenarianism was its ability to rally those excluded from Arab politics. The pied piper of the Muslim oppressed exposed in a harsh and glaring way the great weakness, the forbidden secret, of Arab nationalism: that it was Sunni dominion dressed in secular garb.

Large populations in the Arab world had been left unclaimed and unincorporated by Arab nationalism. In earlier times, unable to walk undetected into decent "secular" company, these marginal individuals and groups had been forced to submit and to petition. The Khomeini revolt gave them the self-confidence, and the material assistance, to put an end to their subservience. And borrowing a page from the old urban elites whose order he was undermining, Khomeini, too, concealed the sectarian edge of his rebellion. The revolt of Shiism for which he had to settle—he could not get the Sunni Arabs to accept his call—was to be, in his words, a revolt of the oppressed and the faithful against privilege. There were wrongs to be righted, and hidden resentments: that the modern Iraqi state had been, since its inception in the 1920s, nothing but a minority dominion of Sunni officers and ideologues; that the Shia in Lebanon had been the dregs of the country; that the Shia in the Gulf had never quite been able to break through the subtle and not-so-subtle barriers between themselves and the ruling order.

True, a decade before the Shia revolt, the city of Damascus had fallen to a minority sect of Alawi soldiers from the Syrian countryside, to country boys with memories of persecution and poverty. But the loss of Damascus was devoid of any great ideological meaning; it was merely another tale of sectarian revenge by an exotic sect beyond the bounds of Islam, of the soldier laying claim to rule. Moreover, the conquest of political power in Damascus left the Alawis in a rule-or-die situation. They couldn't push their victory too far: there were too few of them, and they were only a community of Syria itself, with no presence in other parts of the Arab world.

The Shia challenge, however, was different. This was a rebellion that laid claim to nothing less than the Prophet's mantle, to the full legacy of Islam. And it had going for it, too, the demographic weight of the Shia of Lebanon and of Iraq (where the Shia constitute the majority of the population), and of the substantial Shia communities in the states of the Gulf. Where the Alawis had asserted their right to a share of the oil wealth, the Shia underclass and its clerical tribunes came with trumpets and scripture to offer what mainstream society everywhere has always dreaded: redemption and deliverance. And they came to settle an account that was in many ways as old as Islam itself. It was the rebels against those who had acquired earthly political kingdom, the children of the millennium against the settled classes. This was a clash of two rival historical temperaments: the angry, unreconciled, excluded on one side; the smug, self-assured, included on the other, the "saints" versus the merchants.

It was easy to placate the Alawis. The Shia were far less tractable. Placating them would have required nothing short of a redrawing of the social contract of the Arab world. It would have required people to shed their phobias and their

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obsessions, to set aside old accounts and ancient hatreds. The gatekeepers would have had to be generous. Those who clamored at the gates would have had to be patient and well-mannered. Even in the best of times, this would have been a hellishly difficult undertaking in a world where triumph rarely comes with mercy or moderation. Thus Sunni panic intersected with Shia triumph. The die was cast.

IN LEBANON, the battle for West Beirut was decided in favor of the Shia squatters, of the newly urbanized and their children. Conquering their self-contempt, the Shia finally made their bid for power in February 1984. They emerged as the masters—but challenged by the Palestinians, loathed by those who remembered Beirut as a city of grace and culture, resented as intruders by the Sunnis for whom West Beirut had been home. And they were the masters of a gutted city. For during the preceding decade, the notables and the eminent families of West Beirut had surrendered much of their power to Palestinian gunmen. Thus, when the Shia struck in 1984, the old order in the Muslim sector of the city was helpless to defend itself. Its prior subservience to the Palestinian gunmen and the street gangs had sealed its fate.

The powers of self-delusion and make-believe being what they are, there were many now grieving sentimentally for the charmed city of the past, skipping over a decade of Palestinian bravado and caprice. For example, there was Edward Said, in the *London Review of Books*, expressing "sadness and anger" over Beirut's "ruination":

> Beirut's genius was that it responded immediately to our needs as Arabs in an Arab world grown prison-like, drab, and insufferably mediocre. For some years one could, in Beirut, burn with a hard gemlike flame; even the city's vice and profligacy had a brilliance you could not see elsewhere.

In Said's very unhistorical elegy, the "idyllic provincial capital" merely collapses. Moreover, it collapses, he implies, when Lebanon begins to believe that there is such a thing as a "Lebanese cause." According to the nostalgist, the city had two options: it could have been the political capital of the Palestine Liberation Organization or a "meanly confessional" and "sectarian" place. Is there any wonder that there are so few takers in Lebanon for this kind of double-talk?

In their naïveté and enthusiasm, the Shia of Lebanon had assumed that the credits earned in their fight with Israel would be honored by the Arab world. After all, they had fought an Arab fight, with ferocity and zeal. They pointed out that they had done better against Israel than had the Palestinians. But the gatekeepers in the Arab world and their pamphleteers could not embrace the truck bombers and the Shia militancy that generated them. By then the fight over turf and symbols within the Arab world had become far more urgent than the old struggle against Israel.

It was the Palestinian-Shia war that broke out in Beirut in May 1985—the so-called war of the camps—that provided a measure of relief to those in the Arab world worried about the militancy of the Shia. This time the anti-Shia feeling could be indulged with abandon. The Shia were in a familiar bind. They knew how the argument went. "Arabism," at least in Lebanon, asked that Lebanese tolerate an armed Palestinian presence in Lebanon. Nobody in the Arab world was asking how, and to what end, the Palestinian refugee camps had been rearmed. In 1982-83, it had been the conventional wisdom in the Arab world that the Palestinian interlude had been a disaster, but now things had changed. West Beirut was overrun by the Shia; the hope for the status quo in Lebanon had been in vain. The carnage in and around the camps made it easier once again to have the Shia on the defensive.

STILL, FOR ALL its drama, the battle in Beirut and in southern Lebanon was really an extension of the battle raging farther east between the Iranian revolution and the Iraqi regime. It was there that the Arab political order would make its stand. The "Persian state" had to be kept at bay, and the Iranian revolution quarantined, if the familiar order of things in the Arab world was to have a chance. Just as it was no accident that Khomeini named his military campaigns for Kerbala, the great Shia shrine to the martyrdom of Hussein, it was also no accident that Saddam Hussein of Iraq labeled his campaign Qadisiyyat Saddam. (Qadisiyya was the seventh-century battle in which the Arabs conquered Persia and converted the Persian realm to Islam.) The Iraqi campaign was to be phrased in the simple and crude language of race: Arab versus Persian. Since the 1920s and '30s, Arab nationalism had fallen under the spell of Germanic theories of nationalism—the unity of the "folk," the bonds of race, the entire baggage of German populism. This strain of nationalism had found particularly fertile soil in Iraq. It was natural for Saddam Hussein to fall back on the call of the race and the nation: the tribe was threatened, so the tribe struck back.

The modern state of Iraq had been a patchwork of Sunni and Shia Arabs, Kurds, Jews, and Assyrians. The Jews and the Assyrians had been easy to ruin and overwhelm and expel. The Kurds in the northeast highlands had proven more intractable. The Shia majority in the southern rural part of the country could not be expelled; instead it was politically intimidated and bullied into submission. Its identity was assailed, its schools and its institutions subordinated to the state apparatus. But the course of urbanization that brought the Shia to the cities, and then the reverberations of the Iranian revolution, began to threaten the elaborate Iraqi system of control. Habits of quiescence were shed. A year before he went to war against Iran, Saddam Hussein declared that the Iranian province of Khuzistan might be Iraq's best line of defense against a Shia revolt within Iraq itself. Launching Qadisiyyat Saddam in 1980, he presented it to the wealthier states of the Gulf as *their* campaign as well: as the "Eastern flank" of the Arab world. Had Saddam succeeded, he would have emerged as a modern-day incarnation of the early Arab conquerors, as a defender of orthodoxy and commerce, of Arab "wholeness."

In Saddam's reckoning, the custodians of wealth and power in the Gulf states were "secret sharers" of his anti-Shia and anti-Iranian drive. Of course, he was a bully and an upstart. They were not. His means were violent. Theirs were not. But for both a job had to be done. The work of defending the familiar order of things, of pre-empting the potential rebellion of the Shia stepchildren in the Arab world, fell to Saddam Hussein. The conservative custodians of Arab wealth and power would not physically participate in Saddam Hussein's crusade, but they would subsidize his endeavor. And soon—the tale is familiar—they were throwing good money after bad. A line couldn't be drawn for the Iraqis; the greater their despair and their need, the more the Gulf states had to pay.

Saddam Hussein was no Wellington on the battlefield, but he was of the clan.

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Besides, he was buying time for Saudi Arabia and the smaller states of the Gulf. The Iranian revolution's moment of enthusiasm was bound to pass, and after the Iranian clerics discovered that "revolutionary happiness" could not be exported, a deal might be struck with them. The mullah's zeal might give way to the merchant's cunning. The states of the Gulf would survive the upheaval of the Iranian revolution as they had survived the turmoil of the Nasserite revolt: just as Nasser and Sadat abandoned those in Jordan and Lebanon, and those among the Palestinians, who had really believed in the revolution, so in Iran, reasons of state would prevail, and the enthusiasm of the true believers would be checked.

Of course the Gulf states understood that the Iranian revolution was a greater tempest than Nasser's; it was closer to home, and used more explosive materials. But the Gulf states were left with this generalized bet on Iran's fatigue and its reasonableness. And traditional political sobriety, and the "principle of legitimacy" that the conservative states called their cause, had to be defended on the battlefield. For their part, the Iranians made no secret of what they wanted: an Iraqi regime made in Iran's clerical image. In the Shia shrine towns of Najaf and Kerbala, in Iraq, and in exile in Iran, Iraqi clerics waited for the moment of their revenge. And in the terrified, silent country over which Saddam Hussein presides, it is safe to assume that there are multitudes of men and women waiting to say at last what the Ba'th Socialism of Saddam Hussein means to them.

IN THE GULF, the assignment of taking on the Shia revolt fell to Saddam Hussein. In the Levant, there is the curious spectacle of Yasir Arafat and the remnants of the Palestine Liberation Organization offering themselves as a praetorian guard of the enfeebled old order, as those who would do battle for the Sunni structures against the Shia. And in Syria, sitting astride this divide between the old order and its challengers, is the enigmatic Hafez Assad—himself part gendarme of the old order, part rebel. He journeys with other heads of state to the Islamic summit in Kuwait, where he assures the old order that he shares its aversion to chaos, that he too worries about the possibility of an Iranian triumph in Iraq, that the turmoil of Lebanon is beyond his writ and his power. And just as insistently he tells the rebels that he is one of them, that he could be, after all, nothing else, himself a heterodox stepchild from the impoverished Alawi mountains of Syria, the quintessential outsider.

Sending his army into West Beirut last month, Assad drew a line. The chaos of West Beirut—the extremism of the Party of God zealots and the return of Yasir Arafat's men to the city—had to be checked. Two of the Syrian expedition's senior commanders, the Syrians let it be known, had done the grim task of snuffing out the rebellion of the Muslim brotherhood in the Syrian city of Hama in early 1982. The rebellion in Hama had been put down without mercy and without qualms. Since then Hama has become a code name for official repression, a promise of the extent to which the regime in Damascus is prepared to go in dealing with those who get in its way. With the outright butchery of 22 members of the Party of God so soon after the arrival of Syrian armor into West Beirut, the Syrians had announced a new regime for the city. Above all, for Hafez Assad, no zeal.

As matters stand, there is a stalemate in the Arab world. The Shia challengers push on, driven by a spirit of revenge and by the promise of the millennium. And their revolt—to borrow the words of Victor Hugo, who described another time and place of revolt and vengeance—carries away "great and sickly spirits alike, strong men and weaklings, the tree-trunk and the wisp of straw. Woe to those it carries away no less than to those it seeks to destroy." Though there is no evidence that it can succeed where its predecessors have failed, the Shia assault on the ancien régime has not yet run its course. But the judgment of history so far must be that this latest Arab convulsion, too, has added no new skills, no new arts, to a civilization falling behind the rest of the world. None of this fury has anything to do with the growth of a civilization. Or, in the sorrowing words of Nizar Qabbani, "each day we regress a thousand years."

SERGEI AND THE BEAR

Sergei Prokofiev: A Biography by Harlow Robinson

(Viking, 573 pp., $29.95)

"I asked him would I be permitted to write freely and would I be able to leave Russia if I did not like it there. He said that I would be so busy liking it there that I would have no time to dream of going abroad again. I would, he said, be perfectly free to choose any of the many themes Soviet Russia bountifully allows a writer to use, such as farms, factories, forests in Fakistan—oh, lots of fascinating subjects. I said farms, et cetera, bored me, and my wretched seducer soon gave up. He had better luck with the composer Prokofiev."

The seducer was a hack novelist named Aleksandr Tarasov-Rodionov, well known among the Russian émigrés in Western and Central Europe as a Soviet agent. The resistant prospect was Vladimir Nabokov, who gave the details cited above to Herbert Gold, interviewing him for the *Paris Review* in 1966, and who two decades earlier had parodied Tarasov-Rodionov's line in the "mimeographed circular" on freedoms of speech and press enjoyed by the subjects of Paduk in *Bend Sinister*.

Why did the wretched seducers have better luck with Prokofiev? The usual answer is couched variously in terms of patriotic nostalgia, spiritual crisis, or venal opportunism, depending on the coucher's point of view. Prokofiev himself tended to emphasize the first, at least in public. In a widely quoted comment he made to a French journalist in 1933, the composer let it be known that "the air of foreign lands does not inspire me because I am Russian, and there is nothing more harmful to a man than to live in exile, to be in a spiritual climate incompatible with his race." Soviet writers unanimously favor spiritual crisis. They never fail to compare the composer with the hero of his 1929 ballet *The Prodigal Son*, written on the eve of his decision to return to Russia. The ninth chapter of Israel Nestyev's biography *Prokofiev*, enti-

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tled "Efflorescence," is headed by an epigraph from the biblical parable itself: "For this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found."

Tikhon Khrennikov, head of the Union of Soviet Composers since the fateful year 1948, and thus official spokesman of Soviet arts policy for the last four decades, made the following pronouncement on Prokofiev as part of an obituary appreciation of Stravinsky:

> It was Sergei Prokofiev's good fortune that he returned to his homeland in time. Having experienced a creative crisis in the late '20s and early '30s . . . the great artist sensed that he needed new life impressions. And his Soviet homeland gave him these new impressions.

Prokofiev's happy fate is contrasted with that of Stravinsky, who, "living far from his homeland, . . . withdrew further and further from the national source that had fruitfully nourished his creative imagination, [which] gradually dissipated in the general 'universal' tendencies of European musical development." Stravinsky himself may serve as spokesman for the last position: according to him, Prokofiev's return was "a sacrifice to the bitch goddess, and nothing else; he had had no success in the United States or Europe for several seasons, while his visit to Russia had been a triumph."

THESE VIEWS are not, in fact, irreconcilable, if they are set within a broader historical context, and if personal factors are given their due. Prokofiev was a pampered prodigy, raised by doting bourgeois parents who were persuaded, and who persuaded their son, that he was a second Mozart. (By contrast, Stravinsky was raised as a gentry dilettante whose parents marked him for a civil service sinecure and actively discouraged his professional involvement with music.) Prokofiev was brought up to regard peers and rivals as inferiors, but also grew up fatally dependent on the approval of benign authority. (Stravinsky was brought up a repressed rebel, who nurtured a passionate hatred of those on whom benign authority smiled, such as Alexander Glazunov and the now-forgotten Maximilian Steinberg, Rimsky-Korsakov's most favored pupils.)

Prokofiev was an obsessive rater of things: he assigned "grades" to the books he read and the music he heard as a boy and an adolescent, a habit that reflected his view of human relations. He saw all such relations in terms of rank. Throughout his life he tyrannized those "beneath" him, to the point where even his friends thought him, in the words of the pianist Alexander Borovsky, "a real sadist"; and he fawned on those "above." His married life was symptomatic. With his first wife (whom he never really divorced) it was one continuous, ferocious squabble, the subject of many an embarrassed memoir. He found happiness in midlife with a doe-eyed slip of a girl (whom he never really married), 14 years his junior, who regarded her life's mission as that of Handmaiden to the Lord (she also had good Party connections).

This unlovably ambitious, narcissistic man was never really a musical rebel, even when carefully cultivating the image of an enfant terrible at the St. Petersburg Conservatory. His "advanced" musical vocabulary was a way of tyrannizing his peers, but it clothed a thoroughly conventional musical syntax and expressive rhetoric. He was a shallow modernist who made sure that academicians, notably Nikolai Cherepnin, his protector on the conservatory faculty, could always detect his underlying fealty to, and mastery of, the traditional technical norms and aesthetic values on which grades were based. Fabulously gifted with melodic invention, and able—partly by virtue of an equally fabulous keyboard facility—to give his music a high professional gloss, a veneer of harmonic novelty, and an instant imprint (as even Stravinsky was forced to concede) of personality, Prokofiev was as academic as could be when it came to "form," and absolutely primitive when it came to rhythmic construction and elaboration.

THESE weaknesses came glaringly to the fore in the years when his benign authorities were Diaghilev and the Parisian tastemakers. The works he produced in the period immediately following his graduation from the conservatory were unbelievably meretricious imitations of Stravinsky, particularly of *The Rite of Spring*. In the "Scythian Suite" (originally conceived as another "neoprimitive ballet" like *The Rite*) and the cantata *Seven, They Are Seven* (*Semero ikh*) he was able to catch, if not match, the crashing orchestration and the brusque "polyharmonies" of Stravinsky's great ballet. But its tonal logic and rhythmic syntax eluded him utterly. Prokofiev's imitations were rhythmically square and dull. The cantata came out a veritable series of grandstand cheers ("Se-me-ro ikh! Se-me-ro ikh! Se-me-ro se-me-ro se-me-ro ikh!"). No wonder fastidious critics in Russia during the immediate prerevolutionary period (and Scriabin, too) used to call Prokofiev a musical "*futbolist*."

In bid after pathetic bid for recognition as a leader of the modern movement, the émigré Prokofiev revealed the superficiality of his artistic aims and his ingrained reliance on old forms and rhetoric. His grandiose Second Symphony (1925), a score he labored over in a determined effort to make it as complex as he possibly could, was a monumental flop. The Parisian public and press, who had just greeted Stravinsky's early neoclassic works as the dernier cri, saw right through the surface complexities to the simplistically inflated, outmoded 19th-century "symphonism" Prokofiev continued to purvey.

AT THE time of his negotiations with the Tarasov-Rodionovs, Prokofiev was reeling from the greatest fiasco of his career: an opera (*The Fiery Angel*) on which he had worked for eight years but could not get produced anywhere, though he offered it to houses on both sides of the Atlantic. A concert performance of its second act in Paris under Koussevitzky (who as the opera's publisher had a vested interest in its success) was the only performance Prokofiev would ever hear of this most central of the fruits of his emigration (it would reach the stage only after his death). Like the Second Symphony, *The Fiery Angel* was sonically "progressive," aesthetically retrograde. Invidious comparison with Stravinsky became Prokofiev's unhappily standard lot. A typical review by Georges Auric, written in 1923, contrasted new pieces by Prokofiev and Stravinsky by observing that "musicians who would love [Prokofiev's] concerto-for-dilettantes would not understand Stravinsky's fine work."

Prokofiev in Paris, then, was a man who absolutely needed to dominate, but who found himself cast amid the ranks of the second string behind Stravinsky. As for America, Nina Berberova overheard him saying, "There is no room for me here while Rachmaninoff is alive." In 1927 he experienced the triumphant reception in the Soviet Union to which Stravinsky referred in his comment on "the bitch goddess." In an interview published shortly after the fact, Stravinsky unkindly, but not inaccurately, attributed this success to the "inconstancy" of Prokofiev's musical makeup. What he had in mind were the avowedly accessible pieces Prokofiev made a habit of turning out alongside his programmati-

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cally "difficult" ones: the "Classical" symphony, the violin concerto that Auric had put down in 1923, and the Third Piano Concerto, which since 1921 had been the composer's concert-platform Bucephalus. To hardened modernists such as Stravinsky or Auric, these pieces represented cynical career insurance. Prokofiev himself knew better, as we all know now: his simple style represented the real Prokofiev. It was in these pieces, which he wrote for the sake of audience appeal, and not the ones he wrote for the sake of his reputation with the snobs, that his particular genius resided. It was time for him to beat a tactical retreat.

WHAT THE Soviet Union represented for Prokofiev was a pond—provincial, perhaps, but undeniably huge—in which he would be beyond dispute the biggest fish. It was a place where artistic and political authority were one, and where that authority promised to be (for him) benign. In the anti-modernist, doctrinally optimistic Soviet Union, the high-spirited, "life-affirming" music—attractive, inventive, yet essentially unchallenging—that came naturally to the mind of this Old Conservatory Boy would be valued at a premium. There can be no doubt, moreover, that Prokofiev was given solemn assurances—not only by the Tarasov-Rodionovs, but by real authorities such as Anatoly Lunacharsky (People's Commissar for Enlightenment) or even, as some have speculated, by Stalin himself—that he would be exempt from overt political pressure.

He must have thought he had evidence that this would be true. In 1932, the year he accepted Soviet citizenship, the Russian Association of Proletarian Musicians, the one Soviet organization that had opposed him in 1927 and had all but wrecked his tour of 1929, was abolished by government decree. In 1936, the year he closed his Paris apartment, the notorious *Pravda* editorial "Muddle Instead of Music," which marked the beginning of the darkest, most oppressive period of Soviet arts policy (coinciding, ironically enough, exactly with Prokofiev's period of full-time residence in the U.S.S.R.), made no mention of him, though he was a far more conspicuous target than poor Shostakovich, whom it scared half to death. In 1939, Meyerhold was arrested and disappeared into Lethe just as he and Prokofiev were collaborating intensively on the staging of the latter's opera *Semyon Kotko*. Yet the composer was untouched, and the opera production proceeded on schedule. A man as ambitious and self-absorbed as Prokofiev could only read good omens in all of these events, crazy as that may seem to us in hindsight.

Withal, there can be no doubt that Prokofiev's Soviet years *were* a period of efflorescence, during which he produced most of the works by which he will be remembered: *Lt. Kizhe*, *Alexander Nevsky*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Cinderella*, *War and Peace*, the Fifth Symphony, *Peter and the Wolf*, the violin sonatas, the Seventh Sonata for piano, and so on. It was also, to be sure, the period of the *Cantata for the Twentieth Anniversary of October*, the *Zdravitsa* ("Toast to Stalin"), and *On Guard for Peace*—but a few potboilers seemed a small price to pay for his material security. Besides, currying favor with those above always came easily to him. He avidly sought and cherished his Stalin Prizes, and shamelessly flaunted the car, the clothes, and the gadgets he was privileged to own.

It was thanks to his decision to return to Russia that Prokofiev found himself artistically, and earned his place in music history, as the very last composer to make a permanent and many-sided contribution to the standard repertory, and (with Poulenc, who outlived him by a dozen years) as the last major composer able to use the tonal language of the 18th and 19th centuries without affectation, epigonism, parody, or pastiche. This distinction was not forced upon him by his Soviet milieu; the Soviet milieu enabled him, rather, to achieve his settled, convincingly integrated mature style by alleviating the pressure that had formerly impelled him to try and keep up by hook or crook with the far more authentic modernism of Stravinsky.

True, Prokofiev's last five years, after the infamous 1948 "Resolution on Music of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks)," were a nightmare: a nightmare shared by all his countrymen in the final phase of Stalin's deranged despotism. His music was banned, his wife was arrested, his health was broken. It is possible to look upon his return, when all is said and done, as a personal tragedy. But—and here one must willy-nilly agree with Khrennikov—it was a musi-

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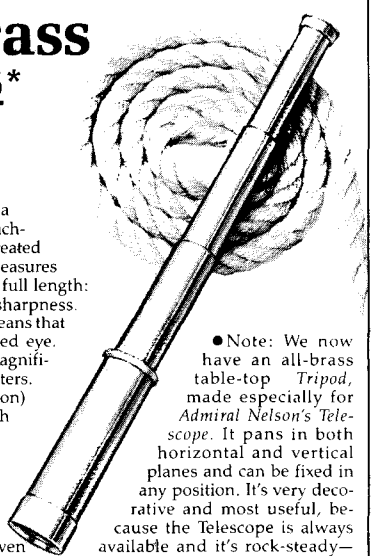

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cal salvation. That the salvation was purchased at the price of personal tragedy is the central fact that gives Prokofiev's biography such a poignant human interest—even when the story is told, as it is in Harlow Robinson's book, without insight or musical competence. One cannot be sure, however, that if faced, like Faust, with the choice between artistic and personal salvation in advance, Prokofiev would have chosen differently.

ROBINSON, who teaches Russian language and literature at SUNY Albany, has been actively engaged in reporting the Soviet musical scene for a number of years. He is the first Western biographer of Prokofiev equipped with a knowledge of his subject's mother tongue. I hope he will not be the last. He has written a dreary and banal book, less a biography than an exhaustive compilation of every fact, event, and quotation he could round up from the published sources, plus a smattering of inconsequential stuff he was shown at the Central State Archive of Literature and Art in Moscow and the Saltykov-Shchedrin Public Library in Leningrad, all scissored-and-pasted together without any consistent point of view. Density of coverage at all times directly reflects the accessibility of source material; hence the last five years, which the Soviet secondary literature has hushed up, is given short shrift.

The facts one might need to form an estimate—several different estimates, in fact—of Prokofiev's career, and of its fatal turning point, are all lying around helter-skelter in the book; and Robinson comes up with an occasional perceptive comment, as when he attributes to the composer a "teacher's pet" mentality as a way of explaining his readiness to accept Soviet discipline. But such felicities are inundated by a sea of mundane reportage, and they are not interrelated in a way that would result in any sort of illumination. The author presents, for example, all kinds of separate details that testify to Prokofiev's narcissism. "Oddly," he writes in one place, "Prokofiev hardly mentions his mother's death in his letters or autobiography." "Specific mention of Lina [his wife] is curiously absent in letters Prokofiev wrote at this time," he writes in another. But he never perceives the pattern they form, or relates them to the shape of the career.

Though a central thesis is missing, there are any number of those factitious "explanations" (usually based on the assumption that an artist's work is his secret autobiography) that betray the amateur historian. Let one stand here for all:

> One is tempted to make a connection between his rekindled interest in the piano sonata and his new romantic feelings for Mira [Mendelson, his "second wife"], which, perhaps, created a store of "intimate" energy that found natural expression in a small and personal medium. (That he wrote the Fifth Piano Sonata in 1923, during another "romantic period" in his life, just before marrying Lina, seems to support that theory.)

Historical background is generally provided in little textbook pellets, often related to the foreground with an irony heavy-handed enough to make the most indulgent reader squirm:

> Preoccupied with performances and composing, Prokofiev probably paid little attention to the disturbing news that was coming from Europe as 1938 ended. Hitler was poised to occupy Czechoslovakia, having received the Sudetenland from Great Britain and France under the agreement signed by Chamberlain in Munich in September. Soon after, his armies would invade Poland.
>
> For Prokofiev, though, 1938 ended well . . . .

But for sheer graceless vulgarity, the following must take the prize:

> Between mid-January and late February 1948, not long before his 57th birthday, three momentous events abruptly changed the course of Prokofiev's personal and professional life. The first was his marriage to Mira Mendelson. The second was the most intense and damaging ideological attack ever launched against Soviet composers. The third was the arrest in Moscow of his first wife, Lina.
>
> Only one of these events was happy . . . .

As to that happy event, Robinson accepts the fact that Prokofiev and Mira Mendelson were legally wed (a claim vigorously disputed by Lina, who surfaced in the West in 1976, and who, now in her late 80s, lives with her son Oleg Prokofiev in England) on the basis of a marriage certificate he was shown at the Central State Archive. He reports, first, that "the general appearance, condition and printing of the document provide no reason to doubt its authenticity," and, second, that no Soviet researcher has been allowed to see it (or if they have, he tells us, "they have chosen, or have been instructed, not to mention it in print"). Of course they have not been shown this bit of paper: they, not foreigners like Robinson, are in a position to assess its authenticity.

Robinson's willingness to swallow a typical bit of Soviet disinformation is indicative of the care with which he evaluates sources. Another example: he speaks darkly of "a secret three-day meeting" at which Andrei Zhdanov, Stalin's cultural henchman, indicted the leading Soviet composers for "formalism." In the next paragraph he refers to "an eyewitness account recorded by the British journalist Alexander Werth." A secret meeting attended by Western correspondents? Wrong on both counts. The meeting was no more secret than an "executive session" of any organization, in this case the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. A transcript was almost immediately published in an edition of 50,000 copies. (Why didn't the Russian-speaking Robinson use this as his source?) It was on the transcript that Werth based his well-known, sensationalized account, entitled *Musical Uproar in Moscow.*

BUT NONE of this is the worst of it. What really galls is the author's pretensions to musical criticism, where his innocence of musical education is displayed in lapse after lapse, from fumbling technical talk of "major fifths" and "simple" keys to smug commentary on this or that composition's "emotional" content. As a book on music, this work can be recommended only to those who want to test Aaron Copland's dictum that when "the literary man . . . puts two words together to characterize a musical experience, one of them is almost certain to be wrong." What mortifies musicians is the unapologetic presumption with which so many literary men (and let's not forget the social scientists) pursue this arrogant course. Would anyone comparably ill-equipped presume to write for publication about the other arts?

The situation testifies to music's low intellectual standing in our culture, which we academic musicologists regularly deplore but to which we have no doubt contributed our share with our notoriously unappetizing specialized literature. What the situation also reflects, of course, is the immediacy and the intensity of response that practically everybody feels toward some type of music, which impels many an unqualified enthusiast to exhibit his feelings to the world. This combination of high sensuous appeal and low intellectual repute has been music's special lot for centuries now, ever since the cate-

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gory of "aesthetics" was given a name; and it has inspired torrents of amateur effusion. It hardly seems fair to blame Harlow Robinson for contributing a few innocuous drops to such a flood.

What is needed is for those who can write responsibly about music to stop addressing only each other, and turn their attention to the needs of the literate public. Until professional musicology produces its share of Meyer Schapiros and Frank Kermodes, the world of trade publishing will pay scant heed to protests of the kind I am making against books like this. It's our own great shame that we have cloistered ourselves up in our guild, and left the field of public musicography, by and large, to the Harlow Robinsons.

RICHARD TARUSKIN

Richard Taruskin's critical study of Stravinsky will be published by University of California Press in 1989.

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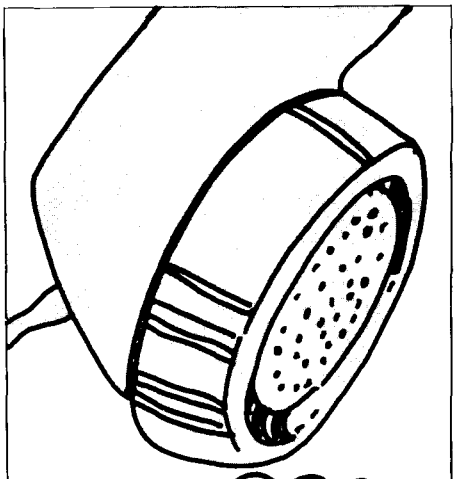
edited by Ron Padgett

(Random House, 194 pp., $16.95, $7.95 paper)

It is hardly surprising, though it is unacknowledged, that the body of criticism of the performing arts, of dance and theater and music, produced in America between 1935 and 1965 is among the most distinguished writing of its kind to be found anywhere in the world. The music criticism of Virgil Thomson, the theater criticism of Stark Young, and the dance writing of Edwin Denby are pre-eminent here, though I would elicit work by Aaron Copland and Edmund Wilson, by Carl Van Vechten and Marsden Hartley, by Paul Goodman and William Carlos Williams in support of my assertion. Moreover, there is a splendid overlap of genres: Henry McBride and Thornton Wilder, E. E. Cummings and Glenway Wescott, Ezra Pound and Gertrude Stein can all be adduced in powerful, unexpected ways; and the texts of Lincoln Kirstein afford an astonishing obbligato to all this work, the accounting to an audience of what it has seen and heard, or of what it has missed.

By no means an isolated instance, then, Edwin Denby was pitched into the journalistic arena at the suggestion of Virgil Thomson, a versatile *animateur* and, along with Kirstein, probably the most nurturing figure in American high culture. I suspect there would have been some amount of Denby dance writing without journalism, but how irregular its likelihood! Denby was not a learned man; he was an educated one, and his allusions to Henry James and Auden, to Sitwell and Marianne Moore, remind us that he was, or would have been, another elitist member of the "We Moderns" section, had it not been for the newspapers.

The demands of daily reportage prodded Denby into some of his crispest formulations ("[Léonide] Massine has no equivalent for mystery except to bring down the lights"). And as in the case of *Immortal Shadows*, Stark Young's theater reviews, one reads through Denby's hundreds of pages of short columns to discover that they constitute, once read, a peristyle of noble proportions, based altogether on "the pleasure of being civilized, of being what we really are—born into a millennial urban civilization. This is where we are and this is what the mind makes beautiful." Such writing is more than accountability and response (more, that is, than journalism). It enters into a dialectic of responsibility with its object. Although, as Denby was to say in



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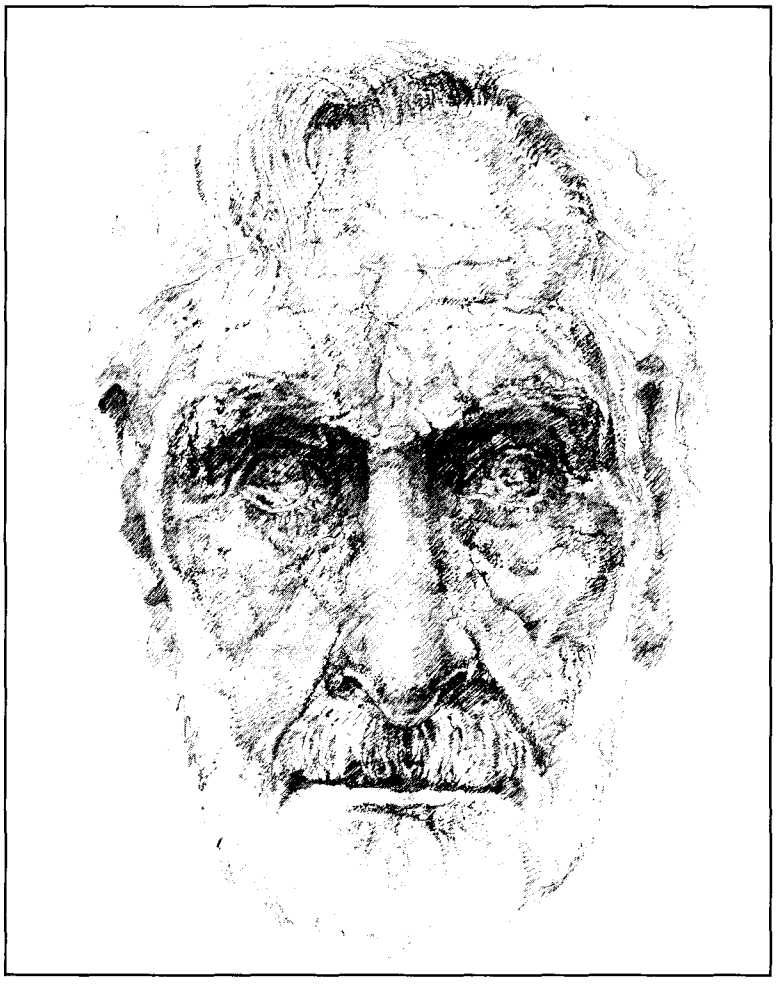
a poem, "property is private during the night," he was concerned by day to give his secrets, his privacy, his fantasies to a public, shared world. I think Denby believed, for all his reticence and his austerity, that art could wed the overt and the covert, provided one's "private property" was powerful enough. As he said about the relation of music to dance, "ballet music is conceived as marriageable—its inherent animation will not be destroyed by the physical presence of dancing, or even by the unavoidable racket that dancing makes onstage."

Born in China (his father was a diplomat) in 1903, Denby's early years were creatively shiftless: Harvard, Vienna, Berlin, Paris, six weeks in the Soviet Union, performances as a "character dancer" with various advanced German groups, observations of Duncan, Nijinsky, Wigman, an extended bout (apparently le mot juste) of psychoanalysis with one of Freud's earliest followers, indecisive stabs at writing of all kinds. Who could have guessed, from the disparate biography sketched by William MacKay in *Dance Writings*, that Denby would become a closely reasoned, consistent, and principled critic, capable of accounting with passionate discipline for Sonja Henie on ice and also for the genius of George Balanchine and Martha Graham, the surest evidence of art America was ever to put on the stage? "A dance critic's education," Denby wrote near the end of his life, "includes dance experience, musical and pictorial experience, a sense of what art in general is about and what people are really like. But," he added with a touch of that ferocity that was the delight of this soft-spoken man's adoring circle, "all these advantages are not enough unless they meet with an unusual literary gift and discipline."

Denby had that gift; he knew it, and reveled in it. Except for a pervasive misuse of "like" in all his writing, verse and prose both ("we coast like on the summer's crest," or again, "The climax may be tragic but—like in opera—the scale is expressed by lyric meditations upon it"), Denby discovers in his rhetoric the means of bridging the presence-gap that has vexed dance critics from Gautier to Mallarmé, and still affords Arlene Croce such difficulties. By presence-gap I mean that apparent lacuna that must vex us in any discussion of a vanished performance. The action passes. Where is the passion, the stored-up meaning, of the art? But I believe that there is an organ of vestigial memory, less vestigial in some than in others, that enables (and in some enforces) the permanent record of our experience at the performance, the record of our response to the present in which, for once, we are made to believe. It was this kind of memory with which Denby was supremely endowed.



DRAWING BY DAVID SCHORR FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Indeed, the gift is exhibited or, better still, exposed in the poetry Denby wrote all his life. He was not a careful, or even a controlled, poet. Except for his sequence *Mediterranean Cities* (1956), his verse is an oeuvre of gasps, snatches, glimpses, gropes:

> I lie motionless, a single retired man
> White-haired, ferrety, feminine, religious
> I look like a priest, a detective, a con
> Nervously I step among the city crowd
> My private life of no interest and allowed . . . .

It is the poetry, one realizes, of Malte Laurids Brigge if he had not killed himself. It is compelled by ecstatic pain, by ecstatic joy; and it is subject to the adjudication of Gertrude Stein (whom Denby never met), as in this couplet:

> and in this bright confusion we are bound
> like anything to everything around

and inveterately to the genius of Hart Crane, whose triumphant distortions of syntax never left him:

> sky-sheen with their sweets enspin
> the hunched hugeness, the mountains of grovelled grief . . . .

But Denby's poetry, venturesome though it is, was not to become part of the canon. Rather, like the poetry of Marsden Hartley, Denby's verse, "a civilized, a friendly habit,/ a sound of measured language in the ears," permits us to mount to the real eloquence and permanent distinction of his prose. For here, in the discussion of 30 years of dance performances, Denby is incomparable and irreplaceable. He establishes a genre, it is true. Yet not just dance writers, but all of us who try to say what the experience of art is like, have been learning from him, ever since those first enthralled and exalted discoveries of Balanchine and Graham. By the late '40s (the first reviews here date from 1936) we had managed to gain from his luminous paradigms a kind of moral authority beneath the technical *astuce*. I offer succinct examples:

> I myself found no pleasure in it, so I cannot speak of it fairly.

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Graham's own faith is in the strangeness love can have. . . . She makes every movement seem that of an actual person, not of a performer. . . . A life of such enormous energies that keeps pouring itself according to its fate into the imaginative world of dance is a godsend!

A tradition is not a police regulation, nor is it a device for repetition. It is a practical aid to an artist.

George Balanchine is the greatest choreographer of our time [1944]. His style is humane because it is based on the patterns the human body makes when it dances; it is not—like romantic choreography—based on patterns the human body cannot quite force itself into.

I guess a critic won't quite avoid being a bit of a pedagogue and a bit of a charlatan.

There is in classical ballet's folderol of stylization the sense that tragedy is natural, and this is, after all, the most interesting emotion the theater can present.

The expression of a reviewer's personal reaction becomes no immodesty when he manages to make distinct to the reader the visible objective action onstage he is reacting to.

Offenbach's humor, like Mozart's, is poised on the suggestion that false love and true love are not so different as one might wish; they are both of them really tender. The joke isn't that romantic love is just a fake, and therefore ridiculous; the joke is that romantic love is real and real love is full of incongruity. . . . The tender irony makes Offenbach a real friend.

As for myself [how frequently this formulation occurs!], as I went down into the subway on my way home, I began to wonder what Rubens would have done if he had been a Russian choreographer.

Everyone is quite peculiar now and then. Not to mention how peculiar anybody can be at home.

Ballet sharpens the eyes and opens the heart: it gives the sense of air on stage and in the house, for air is the medium of dancing.

I naturally think in terms of a story when I get excited.

The pleasures of pointing to Denby's crystallizations are inexhaustible; I must leave them to what I trust will be his immortal readership. Best here to suggest that the astonishing modesty and the equally astonishing ferocity of this great critic is to be realized in the paradox that he is a man for whom art is not life (he is not an aesthete) and for whom life is not art (he is not a sentimentalist), but for whom neither life nor art is conceivable without the other. It makes him merciless: "Ulanova looked like a parody of herself, like an uneasy octopus." And it makes him compassionate: "Cunningham presents what a man dancing alone on the stage may with some dignity be seen to be occupied in doing." And of course it makes him wise: "She [Martha Graham] presents the vastness of the unconscious, where folly is at home, easy to watch and hard to take."

Such wisdom derives—if wisdom can be said to derive from anything, if it is not a kind of grace—from an earned adoration of technique. ("Lyric dancing is concerned with the secret reality of proportions in space.") But it is based on a drastic consciousness of limitations, which was with Denby from very early on. In 1939, he wrote: "When I like something I am sure I am right; when I don't I'm not." It has been the great good luck of our culture that such a critic was on the scene when the greatest performance figure in America was creating his oeuvre. Denby liked Balanchine, he was right, and he was able to show us how we were all right, how a discursive account of what Balanchine had made could to a remarkable degree tell our children what it was we enjoyed—an achievement registered here that has, I think, never before been known to culture. We can read Denby and understand (as we never understood in the case of the dance in the past) what it is we have seen, and what it is we have never seen.

I should like to salute Edwin Denby, whom I knew slightly and always found, in our conversations, of a disconcerting gentleness, by invoking him as he spoke at Frank O'Hara's funeral in East Hampton: frail, white-haired, his blue eyes red-rimmed yet mild as he mourned "our lost poet." For this writer who was adolescent so long, the duties of youth—his own and that of the poet who had been run down by a beach buggy—were those that consented to relinquish nothing. To youth, all ways spoke. And to become a man, an adult man, was achieved at the cost of how many mutilations? Denby's poetry tells that. His criticism tells only of completion, of awareness, of the astounding assurance that "civilization is really a great pleasure."

RICHARD HOWARD

THE MISSION

The Messiah of Stockholm by Cynthia Ozick

(Knopf, 144 pp., $15.95)

Novelists who write about writers run any number of risks. They may be accused of egotism, insularity, or—given the motionless life of the average writer—simple tedium. But Cynthia Ozick, never one to play it safe, has chosen to populate her new novel with not one writer but two.

The first is Lars Andemening, a book reviewer for a Swedish newspaper. By preference, he restricts his reading to difficult, earnest works from obscure little foreign countries. "Prince of the Indecipherable," his colleagues call him. A typical piece of his begins: "Here is a universe as confined as a trap, where the sole heroes are victims, where muteness is for the intrepid only."

The second writer, taken from real life, is a Polish Jew named Bruno Schulz, who was murdered by the Nazis some 40 years before the story opens. Schulz wrote convoluted tales in which "savagely crafty nouns and verbs were set on a crooked road to take on engorgements and transmogrifications." For a sample of *his* style, try a sentence from one of his letters: "These are the mass instincts that eclipse within us a clarity of judgment, reintroducing the archaic and barbaric epistemologies, the arsenal of atavistic and bankrupt logic."

Small wonder that Andemening, an orphan smuggled into Sweden as an infant, has seized upon the notion that Schulz must have been his father. Smaller wonder still that both men should engage the attention of Cynthia Ozick, herself a writer who has always avoided taking the shortest path between two points.

Her subject matter generally reveals a cousinship to Isaac Bashevis Singer. Golems and dryads and dock witches scam-

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per across her pages, and the Jewishness of most of her characters is central to their identity. But her prose lacks Singer's directness and simplicity. Great clots of turgid phrases pour forth; long sentences knot upon themselves and swallow their own tails. People are summed up from outside and from a considerable height. Physical descriptions seem oddly lacking in vantage point—oddly nonphysical, in fact.

What most complicates her writing, though, is her backhanded approach to narrative. Why, exactly, does she choose such-and-such a beginning point, such-and-such a point at which to digress or to analyze? In her novel *The Cannibal Galaxy*, for instance, the plot wandered into view about halfway through the book. It happened to be a perfectly wonderful plot: a narrow, reactionary headmaster is baffled when his most unpromising pupil grows up to be a famous artist. The reader's response is, "Oh, *now* I see what she's getting at! In other words . . . ."

In other words; in plainer words; to make a long story short . . . .

The Messiah of Stockholm has some of the same backhandedness. A three-and-a-half-chapter synopsis of past events separates a man's arrival at a shop from the start of his business there, and this occurs at such a crucial moment that we have a sense of reading on with a thumb left behind to mark the detour. But the fact that we resent the interruption testifies to the story's pull. It's packed with possibility: Lars Andemening's entire, airless life is devoted to researching his putative father, Bruno Schulz. With the help of Mrs. Eklund, a book dealer who keeps miraculously locating various memorabilia from Schulz's native village of Drohobycz, Lars peruses old photos and letters, undertakes the study of Polish, and reads and rereads Schulz's two published books. He would probably be happy to continue in this vein forever, but one day events take a surprising turn. A woman named Adela shows up claiming that Schulz is *her* father, and with her she has a manuscript that she insists is Schulz's long-lost, unpublished masterpiece, *The Messiah*.

Partly, of course, Ozick's novel is a parable, complete with a morally instructive ending. The Messiah of her title is not Adela's manuscript but Lars Andemening himself, single-mindedly crusading (amid the constant, eerie smell of something roasting) to deliver from oblivion the writings of various vanished Eastern Europeans. As Mrs. Eklund puts it, somewhat bitterly:

> He took on everyone's loss; everyone's foolish grief. Foolish because unstinting. Rescue was the only thought he kept in his head—he was arrogant about it, he was steady, he wanted to salvage every scrap of paper all over Europe. Europe's savior! His head was full of Europe—all those obscure languages in all those shadowy places where there had been all those shootings—in the streets, in the forests. He had attached himself to the leavings of tyranny, tragedy, confusion.

It is also part fairy tale, at least in the manner of its telling. Lars lives in an apartment "no bigger than a crack in the wall," and the magical Mrs. Eklund is a "thick globular dwarf of a woman" who resembles a "forest gnome." One of the book's more significant objects is a jar like Ali Baba's, which, when its contents are set afire, chatters and boils, "battering the little table, dancing across it like a demon." And after Adela's arrival, Lars tells Mrs. Eklund that "there's no room in the story for another child. . . . You know the story as well as I do. There's only me." It's an *old* story, is what he's saying—a ritualistic, familiar story, like a folktale or a legend told many times before.

And here, at times, told vividly. Lars's walk through Stockholm on a snowy night can chill your bones, and a description of his writing process is convincingly feverish. ("It was as if his pen, sputtering along the line of rapid letters it ignited, flung out haloes of hot grease.") Or watch Lars and Mrs. Eklund endlessly pondering the riddle of Bruno Schulz:

> Tracings, leavings, enigmatic vestiges—over each tendril they had their calculations and speculations and probings and puzzlings. Drohobycz itself a puzzle: a place recorded on the map of Poland only in the tiniest print. It was hardly there at all. To push through into the scenery and substance of Drohobycz was like entering a pinhole. The hasidim of the neighborhood—gone. Lars's father's father's shop—a drygoods business—gone. Nothing left; not a ribbon, not a thimble. Between Drohobycz and Lars's father there had occurred a mutual digestion. Street by street, house by house, shop by shop, Lars's father had swallowed Drohobycz whole; Drohobycz was now inside every tale. And Drohobycz had swallowed Lars's father also: a drab salary, a job he despised, a band of relatives to support—paralyzed, stuck, how was it possible to leave?

ELSEWHERE, though, the prose is more opaque. It draws too much attention to itself; it brings to mind that bumper sticker from the '60s: ESCHEW OBFUSCATION. There are lengthy strings

CHILD'S MOON

Eyes don't grow.
That's why a baby's eyes look big.
While the length of the adult body
buried like a time bomb
in the soft bones
pushes out, the eyes,
like scars, remain the same.

The eggs, I hear, are in there
too, from day one.
As women age so do their eggs.
Some are shriveled and tough
as elephant skin; sadly,
those eggs travel their routes
like the ghosts of retired mailmen

while in the brain—
that dead-letter office—everything
that ever happened to you
remains, each tune you hummed,
each lunch, fact, caress.
A stroke or seizure can call forth
a particular summer dusk.

In the future, we may
be able to eradicate bad memories
with electrical prods precisely applied
to the temporal lobes, more efficient
than psychoanalysis, more amazing
than men on the moon.
How slowly they planted colorless flags

in earth, stone, or dust—I can't remember
now, it was so long ago we watched them
then picnicked in our own back yard.
We were allowed to stay up
until the print on our pajamas
turned sooty and vibrated
in half-light, like the moon.

In lightyears we were put to bed.
Our parents waved and waved,
distant as the moon men
or as we are now, as adults,
from our own insides,
from each of our secret,
whisper-jet travel towards death.

LISA ZEIDNER

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of adjectives—"crumpled, splotched, speckled, aged" and "buried, beaten, bruised, drowned" and "broken, beaten, hidden" (all these within a mere page and a half). Some of the images seem curiously askew, or just uncomfortable. For instance: "the merciless boil of a saving chimerical eye" and "those indecipherables that steam up from the stomach-hole of Central Europe" and "his old certainty, grown out of him like a fingernail. He chopped it off."

Or: "Lars, looking with all his strength, felt his own ordinary pupil consumed by a conflagration in the socket. As if copulating with an angel whose wings were on fire." And after reading one of Schulz's books: "He has washed his fingers in that half-familiar dread print like a butcher with a bloody sheep in his grip, or like a tug dragging a river for a body." Anatomical descriptions seem coined by bemused visitors from outer space:

> It was his habit to pull on the cords of his eyebrow muscles, which in turn shot folds across the lids, and these, squeezing down, sharpened his view and deepened the trenches.
>
> Gunnar turned his back on Anders, who was allowing the steam from his cup to rise up the two smokestacks of his redoubtable nose, right-angled and attached high at the bridge so as to conceal the other side of his face.

The real core of the story does glimmer forth, even so. As in *The Cannibal Galaxy*, there is a moment when you say, "Ah, yes, now I understand what this book is about." A belated moment, yes; but an admiring "Ah." (It is a haunting, provocative plot, no doubt about it.) The only question is, do you want to have to strain the story from a dense ragout of language, or don't you? And the question is not rhetorical. Some people do want to; they like conundrums. They like to take a certain distance from their reading—which is, finally, the issue at stake here. What you have to decide is not whether Cynthia Ozick is a "good" writer or a "bad" writer (clearly she is intelligent, skilled, and consummately serious) but whether you expect from your reading a visceral experience or an intellectual exercise. I vote for visceral experience, myself; but that is not to deny *The Messiah of Stockholm* its strengths. It does intrigue and entertain, and it does weave a tale that is richly, intensely imagined.

ANNE TYLER

CORRESPONDENCE, *from page 6*

can't figure out the location of the lawn where Jane Gallagher's dog relieved itself.

It was Maine. The Caulfields lived in New York and summered in Maine. The book says so.

GUY YEASTER
Mott Community College
Flint, Michigan

MORMON PARADOX

To the editors:

"This Is The Place" (Salt Lake City Diarist, March 2) recalls those letters home from 19th-century colonials and sentimental tourists, those paeans to the "engaging simplicity" of the "healthy and happy" natives. One can marvel at the logic that permits Henry Fairlie to "find unacceptable the place ordained for women" and the "lavish funding of the whole network of right-wing religious organizations" and then go on to laud the Mormons' "staunchness" in upholding "other values"—"not least the strength, stability, and attractive numerousness" of the Mormon family. One is alarmed by his suggestion that the Democratic Party's resistance to pressure from fundamentalist religious groups is a function of "Eastern prejudice." And by whose definition are the Mormon elders—with their avowed anti-homosexual stance and nationwide anti-ERA campaign—"thoroughgoing Americans"?

To live in the West is to know that it is neither the "intellectual and cultural waste" he accuses Easterners of imagining, nor the last outpost of "fabulous spaciousness" he so rhapsodically describes—and which Easterners *do* imagine. It is simply another place with its own complex and particular social and moral landscape.

FRANCINE PROSE
Visiting Assistant Professor
Department of English
University of Utah
Salt Lake City, Utah

SEARCH FOR FIDELITY

To the editors:

In the process of preparing a "biography" on Boston's privately held Fidelity Investments, it would be valuable for me to receive from TNR readers additional material and comments on all kinds of experience, past and present, they might have had as customers of this company, and of course all other information they deem worthwhile. I'd much appreciate an answer, even if it has to be negative. Responses may be sent to H. D. Laun, Monrepos, Mill Neck, New York, 11765.

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Mill Neck, New York

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CAMBRIDGE DIARIST

Vatican't

PROVIDING THE COMMENTATING community with a bit of relief from Iranamok, along comes what might be called Vatican't. The new prohibitions from Rome are outlined in a document entitled "Instruction on Respect for Human Life in Its Origin and on the Dignity of Procreation: Replies to Certain Questions of the Day." (The document is not, repeat not, entitled "Sex Tips for Modern Girls From 60-Year-Old Bachelors Who Have Taken Vows of Chastity.") Surrogate motherhood is out, artificial insemination by donor is out, in vitro fertilization of wives by husbands is out. And of course contraception, still, is out. Having been told they have to get pregnant, women are now being told they can't. More precisely, fertility is mandatory for those who are able to conceive but don't want to, forbidden for those who want to conceive but aren't able to. Catch-XXII.

THE SUNDAY MORNING talk shows, secular humanism's answer to hymns and sermons, zero in on the Vatican document. A personable young Irish monsignor answers respectful questions via satellite from Rome. Back in the studio, bishops and senators react. The American clerics interviewed seem glumly aware that Catholics who badly want children will be apt to choose parenthood over obedience. A questioner points out to a bishop that the prohibition against in vitro fertilization appears to fly in the face of both charity and experience, and says she can't understand the argument against it. "The argument is an argument from faith," the bishop replies irritably. His curtness surprises me. There must be more to it than that.

CURIOUS, I DIG out the previous Wednesday's *New York Times* and read the full text of the Vatican's instruction. Sure enough, there is an argument of sorts buried in the dense prose of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. It is the same as the argument against contraception. There is an "inseparable connection, willed by God and unable to be broken by man on his own initiative, between the two meanings of the conjugal act: the unitive meaning and the procreative meaning." Contraception is forbidden because it sacrifices the procreative meaning to the unitive, in vitro fertilization because it sacrifices the unitive to the procreative. Q.E.D. The argument is coldly and relentlessly deductive, depending as it does upon a bald assertion of what is "willed by God." A Catholic couple unable to conceive without medical help might protest that the husband's low sperm count is also "willed by God"; more to the point, so is the human ingenuity that enables them to overcome it. But the argument is over. The bishop was right after all: it's an argument from faith, which in this case means an argument from authority. Take it or leave it. And the anguish of the couple? "Spouses who find themselves in this sad situation," replies the document, "are called to find in it an opportunity for sharing in a particular way in the Lord's Cross, the source of spiritual fruitfulness."

THIS IS NOT TO SAY that there is nothing for a secular humanist like me to admire in the Vatican document. It is refreshing, even uplifting, to read a committee-produced 1987 text that has so little awe of modern science and modernity in general, that asserts that no human being can "be reduced in worth to a pure and simple instrument for the advantage of others," that is so manifestly unguided by public opinion polls, and that nowhere contains the word "incentives." Yet there are unwelcome reminders of the old authoritarian ways. Artificial insemination by donor, for example, is not only proscribed for Catholics; it is also, if the Church has its way (admittedly a highly unlikely prospect), to be criminalized in civil law. And of course non-Catholics thus forced into barrenness by state power would be denied even the dubious comfort of metaphorical crucifixion. William Jennings Bryan, where are you?

MOVING RIGHT ALONG, the Sunday show I am watching shifts briskly from Fallopian tubes to the glowing phosphor kind. David Brinkley mentions the cutbacks at CBS News, and poses the question: What does it all mean? George Will replies that worrying about it is another instance of the narcissism of the media, and notes that when much larger numbers of auto workers are laid off, the threat to civilization is markedly less clucked over. True, but spare a thought for the consumer. Most Americans get their news from television, and an informed citizenry is widely regarded as helpful, if not indispensable, to the functioning of a democratic state. The difference between the auto industry and the TV news industry is that while we can get better cars from the Japanese, we can't get better TV news from the Japanese. (Or can we? Better make that *network* TV news. When it comes to the local stuff, even South Korean products would probably be superior.)

I HEAR A STARTLING report from Alabama, where a federal district judge named W. Brevard Hand—known to courthouse regulars as Unlearned Hand—has rendered a decision banning 45 textbooks from the public schools. According to Judge Hand's reasoning, since the textbooks in question do not promote Christianity, it follows that they promote "the religion of secular humanism." Therefore the textbooks constitute an establishment of religion by the state of Alabama. This is unconstitutional, as Judge Hand learned when an earlier decision of his got blown away on appeal. That was the one where he declared that it was perfectly OK for Alabama to have an established state religion, adding that (*a*) the Bill of Rights only applies to the feds and (*b*) "a member of a religious minority will have to develop a thicker skin if state establishment offends him." The new Hand decision won't last long either, but for now it seems that secular humanism is indeed an officially recognized religion. This is welcome news for the unchurched among us, who didn't even know we had a religion until the fundamentalists gave us one. I suggest to my fellow secular humanists in the Cotton State that they hasten to claim the privileges to which their new station entitles them: clergy parking spaces; favorable consideration in the awarding of UHF television licenses; and (since both the federal and state governments are secular humanist institutions) the total deductibility of all tax payments from taxable income. If my calculations are correct, this should reduce secular humanist tax liability to zero. But better act fast. Judge Hand may like us, but the Supreme Court isn't as hospitable to our religion as it used to be.

H. H.

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Issues of the Information Age:

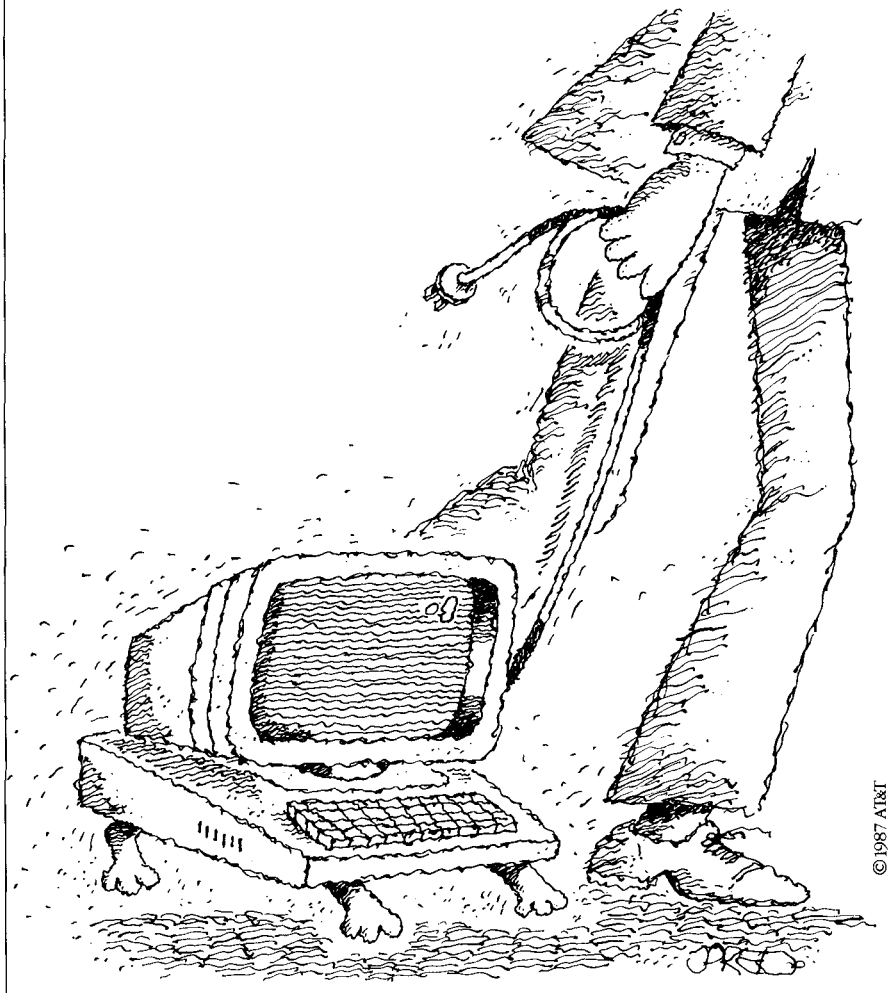
The paradox of power.

The Information Age, for all its potential, has brought with it a new kind of problem. Often, the machines that contribute so much to the flood of information do little to help most of us cope with it. They are difficult to use, rigid in their demands, almost arrogant in their inability to work with any but their own kind. They are the muscle-bound tools of specialists.

In our view, the problem is not that the machines are too powerful for the rest of us. They are not powerful enough.

This is the paradox of power: the more powerful the machine, the less power it exerts over the person using it. We define a more powerful machine as one that is more capable of bending to the will of humans, rather than having humans bend to its will. The definition is deeply ingrained in AT&T. The telephone is such a powerful device precisely because it demands so little of its user.

AT&T foresees the day when the Information Age will become universal. People everywhere will participate in a worldwide Telecommunity. They will be able to handle information in any form—conversation, data, images, text—as easily as they now make a phone call.



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That day is coming closer. One example: scientists at AT&T Bell Laboratories are developing "associative" memories for computers, further enabling the machines to work with incomplete, imprecise, or even contradictory information. That's perfectly natural for a human. What makes it a breakthrough is that these computers won't ask you to be anything else.

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